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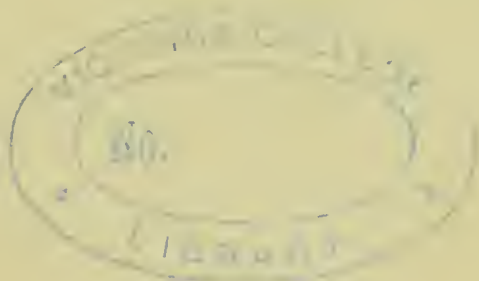


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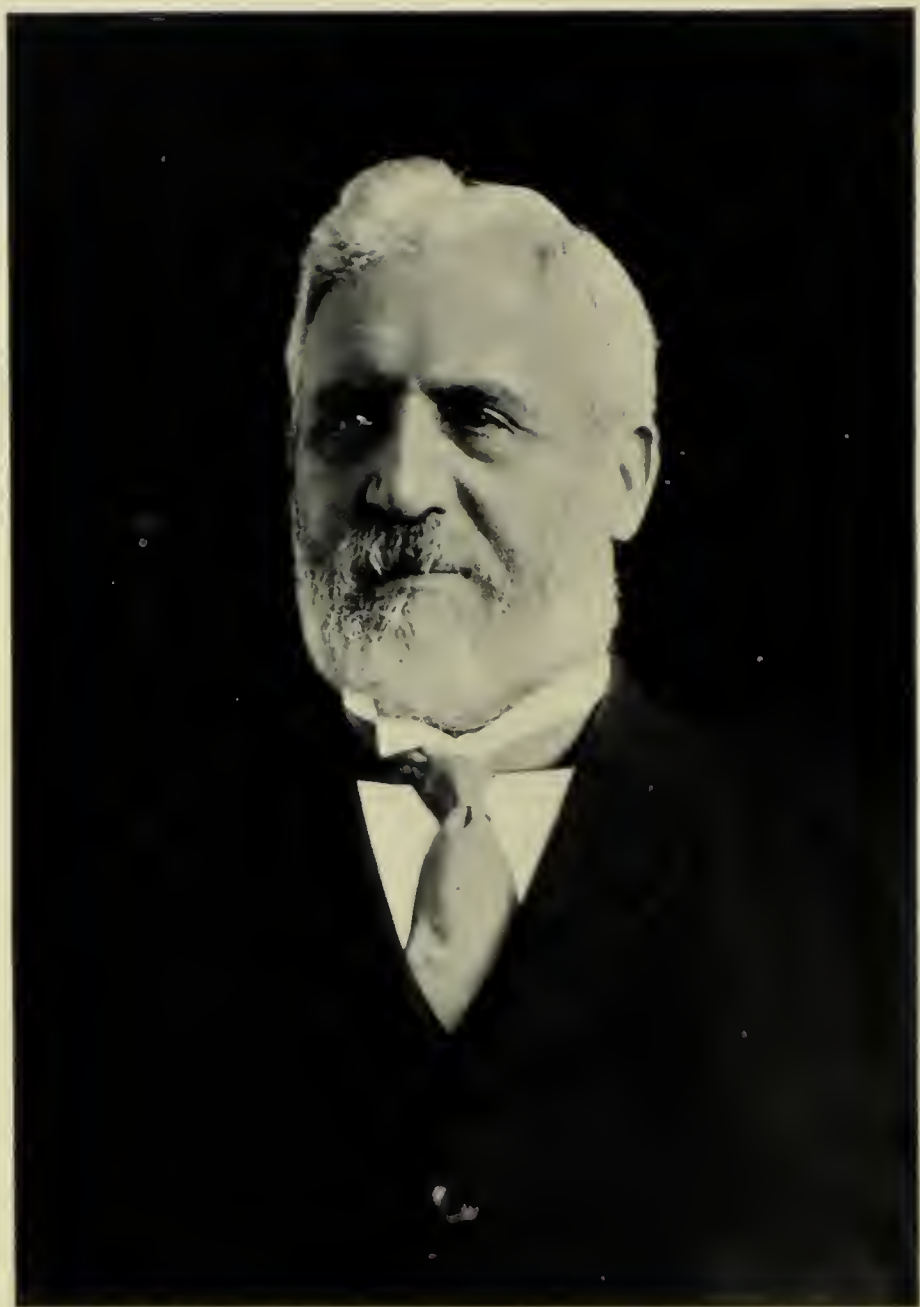
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HONEST JOHN OLIVER





[B. A. McKelvie.]

John Oliver.

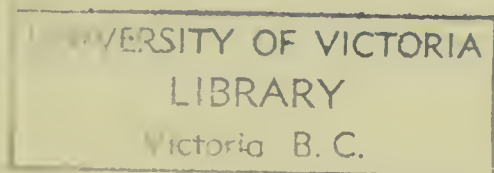
HONEST JOHN OLIVER

The Life Story of the
HONOURABLE JOHN OLIVER

Premier of British Columbia

1918—1927 (17 August)

BY
JAMES MORTON



London, Toronto and Vancouver
J. M. DENT AND SONS LTD.

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Printed in Great Britain
by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd.,
London and Aylesbury
for
J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
Aldine House Toronto & Vancouver
London (Eng.) . Melbourne . Wellington
First Published 1933

JOHN OLIVER

AN ELEGY

We saw him whitened with the years
And graven with the cares of State,
A simple man among his peers
And yet outstanding, strong, and great.

He who had battled with the wild,
Had drained the swamp and dyked the sea,
Was stricken helpless as a child,
That lisps beside its mother's knee.

When whipped by fire and scorched by pain
The fountains of his strength were dried,
He faced the unpitying stars again
With dauntless soul and manly pride.

In battle strong, in counsel wise
He grasped the task that came to view,
He chased no meteor in the skies,
But did the thing he found to do.

Though loud and strong in argument
Tender as women's were his eyes,
His work with higher purpose blent,
His life was duty's sacrifice.

To adverse winds a granite rock,
Yet streams of kindness through him flowed,
And children's hands in his would lock,
For guidance on life's rugged road.

JOHN OLIVER

O statesman, husband, father, friend !
O champion of the wise and just !
Your great example will not end
When we are one with flowers and dust.

Perchance in God's great council hall
Where ampler planets flare and roll
And voices through the vastness call,
Still rules and reigns that mighty soul.

And his great influence pulsing through,
Circling like light from star to star,
Shall bless us like the falling dew
And guide us in the years afar.

Still vibrant down the Halls of Time
That noble life shall echo on.
Our children grown to age and prime
Will speak to theirs of Honest John.

J. M.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

IN presenting the life-story of John Oliver I render thanks to all those members of his family and the intimate friends who have so willingly assisted me. I am grateful also to those who have rendered me official assistance, including many in high public positions.

While the main events of this story are based on authentic documents and reliable witnesses, I do not claim that it is exact in every detail. Something has been left to inference and imagination in describing how Honest John would react to any given circumstance. Nor has any attempt been made to record events in the strict order of time, but rather to maintain a sequence of related interests.

JAMES MORTON.

VICTORIA, B.C.,
September 1932.

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HONEST JOHN OLIVER

PROLOGUE

JOHN OLIVER was dying.

Like a white octopus the terror gripped his vitals ; and, as a sponge dilates when it touches the water, so the monster swelled within him, steadily crushing out his life. Resistlessly it worked in its benumbing silence, but once in a while it tightened its tentacles and stung. Then the old fighter gritted his teeth, pursed his lips, and clenched his hands in fierce resistance. But the spasm passed, the body relaxed, the massive white head turned slowly on the pillow, the fading blue eyes opened and closed, and he sank into gentle reverie.

The warmth and perfume of an August day floated in through the open window and soothed him like a silent lullaby. The sound of a motor-car, the bark of a dog, the rumble of a street car a short distance away, the subdued voices of the household—all these came to him as from another world and were lost in the visions that lighted his mind.

* * *

Around the city, on the south shores of Vancouver Island, the blue sea broke in foam that fell from its lips as softly as the snow. The water glittered in a soft, summer sheen far out towards the mountains crowning the neighbouring shores. It seemed to palpitate and swell as if with an inner life that gave it sentience and meaning.

John Oliver with closed eyes saw it all, and as he dreamed, the spirit of the sea—that aura that shimmered over it like an almost invisible veil—seemed to lift with all its undulant motion. Over the shores on every side it rose higher and higher, and converging to a centre it surged upward and onward into the room where he lay, and his soul floated upon it rocked as on the sea of death.

As the sea rose and fell, visions of his life passed before him as

before the eyes of a drowning man. Sometimes the waves lifted him high in the sunlight, sometimes he sank into the depths and the salt tang of bitter experience wetted his lips. But ever as he rose and fell, partly engulfed, the pictures passed before his mental eye like a chaotic film. He saw the body of that sea washing over Delta farm lands, and himself building dykes to hold it back or digging drains to carry the salt away. It wafted him back to the shores of England, and the Valley of the Dove in all its beauty of lush green grass and sparkling waters passed before him. Mingled with it was the damp twilight of a lead mine, brightened in spots with starlike visions of lamps in miners' caps, and he saw a boy driving a donkey pulling a truck loaded with ore. And there was the face of a mother long dead and the children who gathered around her.

* * *

In a trice he was over the sea again. The applause, the derision, the protests of listening legislatures or of crowds in halls or open spaces sounded in his ears. The next moment he was lifting huge boulders, wrenching out stumps or ditching in the miry clay among a fantastic crowd of fellow workers. The toil of animals was strangely mingled with his own as oxen dragged the plough through virgin land, damp and sweet smelling, or behind horses he harrowed the soil in a cloud of summer dust. The screech of a sawmill, the roar of a thresher were mingled in this phantasmagoria of sights and sounds.

* * *

He saw himself digging deep into the bowels of the earth, and he was sinking in utter darkness and despair, when, gazing upward, he saw a cluster of stars, like a fragment of the silver city of God, shining down upon him. Toward those stars he seemed to float once more among the laughter and applause of great multitudes. But the laughter died, the applause faded away—the tumult of the multitudes mingled weirdly with the strains of “Unto the hills around do I lift up mine eyes,” and from this evolved a softer, sweeter melody that seemed to swell and recede from infinite distances like the song of the angels calling him home.

* * *

He sank once more and the waves swathed him softly like a sea of mist blotting out all earthly memories, and luminous as with a phosphorescent glow they wafted him into the greater light beyond.

* * *

To take this cinema of his dying hours—these visions of the drowning man—and place them in some order of event and time, so that this fine example of strenuous living and old-fashioned virtue may not be lost to the world, is the purpose of this history.

Read 1-9-20-12

SCENE I. THE VALLEY OF THE DOVE

ON the borders of Derbyshire and Staffordshire lies one of the loveliest scenes in England—Dovedale, or the Valley of the Dove.

In spots the river is as gentle as its name, but in others it flashes down in musical and sparkling cascades. In the flush of summer the hazels and birches, hung with honeysuckle and wild roses, dip their branches into the stream as it passes through a valley gemmed with flowers set in pastures of luscious green and embowered with shady trees. It is in its lower parts, where the quieter pools dimple under the fringing willows, that it becomes indeed “a haunt of Ancient Peace.” It was a favourite haunt of Izaak Walton in his day, and no doubt much of the “Compleat Angler’s” gentle philosophy was engendered by this river side.

But Nature does not always extend to the humans who inhabit them the peace that sanctifies her dales. Here, as elsewhere, went on the eternal battle for bread, and nowhere was it fought more keenly than in a workman’s stone cottage on the top of a hill in the village of Hartington near by. It was felt the more intensely, because Robert Oliver and his wife had fulfilled the injunction of Mother Church and their family had multiplied upon the earth. The multiple consisted of nine children, the eldest of whom was a son of Mrs. Oliver by a former marriage, though John was the senior on his father’s side. When the Valley of the Dove was smiling most radiantly he came as a gift of summer on the 31st of July, 1856.

Robert Oliver, the father, had started life as a farm labourer. The typical Hodge of his time wore a cream-coloured smock that met corduroy or fustian trousers at the knees, and he sought the joy of life in a tankard of ale at the village “pub.” But Robert Oliver was not of these. A handsome man over six feet in height, and of proportionate breadth of shoulder, he stood up well above his fellow-workmen physically and in mental acumen. He had married Emma Lomas, who proved a worthy helpmeet.

Both worked hard and, in spite of a rapidly increasing family to be kept on small pay, they managed to make some progress.

Under such circumstances John received his early education at the village school. Endowed with a naturally keen, inquisitive mind, he availed himself of his opportunities to the best advantage, but those opportunities must have been handicapped by the constant calls on his time as the second of an increasing brood. The heavily burdened mother had to call on him for help in the endless errands and chores incidental to the conjunction of a big family and a small wage ; but self-help was born in the Olivers and the assistance was willingly rendered.

This explains, perhaps, why John in his childhood never learned to play, and many years afterwards, when he saw the merry children at their games, a mist would steal over his eyes at the thought of all that in his own childhood he had missed.

Recalling this period he remarked in his old age : " I can remember as a little kid in petticoats how I used to run to my mammy and catch hold of her skirt and ask for a piece of bread and treacle."

Thick slices of home-made bread spread with the black treacle no doubt formed a substantial part of his childhood fare.

His schooling was of the rather crude and hard kind that obtained in English villages in mid-Victorian days. The school-room was a bare and cheerless place with the inky and splintered desks of plain deal, and the straight, hard seats that constituted most of the furnishings. The teacher ruled with a hard black ferule, like a miniature shillelagh, with which he pointed out the lessons or chastised the pupils according to his mood and temperament. There was no easy rhyming of " cat and rat " or " log and dog," but a steady grind of " A, B, C," or " 1, 2, 3 " which appeared to be lifted like so many pieces of raised type from the blackboard, and were hammered by the teacher's ferule into the wandering brains of his pupils, eagerly calculating the time till the hour of their release should come.

In this early schooling John appears to have been given a sound foundation in arithmetic and to have learned the rudiments of reading and writing, but grammar either was not taught or he was too young to absorb it. In later years he acquired an

excellent vocabulary, but common grammatical errors crept into his speech until the end.

Another source of education was the Methodist Sunday School, of which he was a regular attendant and one of the most apt scholars. It was there his power of memory was first exercised. He could learn whole chapters of Scripture and repeat them word for word. In this, perhaps, lay the secret of his mastery of simple and forcible English and his readiness in Biblical quotation. There also was implanted that background of religious faith which sustained and comforted him to the end of his days.

It was at one of the Sunday School concerts that he undertook to recite "A man's a man for a' that," that gospel of the dispossessed as preached by Robert Burns. A good Scotsman would have been amused to hear John render in a Derbyshire accent :

" A king may mak' a duke or lord,
A belted knight and a' that——"

Anyhow, the sentiment suited his dissenting audience of working people and small tradesmen and, sooner than he knew, John was going to realize the power of a duke. Meanwhile he continued to acquire his religious training in the bosom of the Methodist Church, but he never became a keen denominationalist. Writing to a correspondent shortly before his death, he said :

" Frankly I should find it hard to define my own church. I was born and baptized in the Church of England, brought up as a Methodist, and afterwards attended a Presbyterian Church."

He preferred simple, unritualistic services, and was tolerant enough to care little which of these satisfied his need. He had nothing to say against his Mother Church of England, but in the back of his mind he probably associated it with those aristocratic powers against which he and his kind had been in active or passive rebellion since the days of Oliver Cromwell.

Subconsciously he may have recalled the parish churches where the families of the squire and parson occupied nice, red plush seats in front, while the working people sat on hard seats at the rear, and heard the aristocratic vicar with his white robes and

ringed hands read "Blessed are the poor," and exhort them to obey their pastors and masters and be content in that state of life unto which it had pleased God to call them.

John was already ambitious. He had no mind to be content in that state of life to which he had been born or called, nor could he altogether appreciate the blessings of the poor as opposed to the miseries of the rich. He could not observe that the rich were very anxious to abandon their curse or take on the blessings of poverty, or that the poor would be unwilling to take the camel's chance at the needle's eye, or forgo their beatitude for a little of the repose and rich living which constituted their idea of heaven on earth.

In his few spare moments John read everything in sight. He absorbed all the stock material of the home of an English workman in that age—the Bible, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, scraps from Radical newspapers—a limited assortment from which his retentive memory absorbed a ragbag of knowledge which he digested to some purpose.

Looking back on this period he once told how he supplemented his home reading by copies of *Reynolds's Newspaper* (the organ of extreme Radicalism in England then) borrowed from his uncle.

"It came to me somehow," he observed, "that one day I should make speeches in Parliament myself; so young as I was I used to read the reports of the debates in the House of Commons as reported in *Reynolds's*. There I got my first training in debate."

In this way—brushed and combed by a fond mother in the morning, dawdling to school, playing or fighting with his school-mates at recess, scampering gladly home, running errands, cutting the kindling, blacking the boots, seizing his mother's skirts with one chubby hand and holding out the other for "a picee of bread and treacle," and rounding the day with a prayer and sound sleep—passed the life of this sturdy boy till the age of eleven, when a change came over the spirit of his dream.

SCENE 2. THE LEAD MINE

ROBERT OLIVER, of the handsome figure and commanding presence, was not minded always to remain a farm labourer. The drudgery irked him. In those days it was often customary for the teamster, or "waggoner" as he was called, to rise in the dark at four in the morning, and by the light of a candle stuck in a dim, horn lantern, to work for about two hours, cleaning out, currying, and feeding his horses. In the winter months he was out in the fields by daylight and toiled there with slight intermissions till dark. With oilcloths and long, heavy boots he had to work through days of rain in muddy ditches draining the soaked fields. At that his wages were meagre and his food was the plainest.

Like the Psalmist, he looked to the hills and there found his relief. In those hills were lead mines, and there he went to work. The pay was better, the hours more regular than on the farm, and above all he was learning the business. He had soon mastered it sufficiently to enable him to take small contracts for tunnelling and taking out the ore. It was the end of regular school-days for John, though he got in a little half-time.

His father mustered sufficient capital to buy a donkey and necessary equipment for blasting and moving the ore to the pit mouth, and to John was assigned the task of driving the donkey. Working in the damp darkness of the mine, lighted only by the lamps in the miners' caps, may not have seemed a congenial occupation for a boy; but he was strong, it was work that gave outlet to his abundant physical energy, and he endured it. So day after day he went and hitched the donkey to the truck which ran on rails from the pit mouth to the latest blastings. In those days they blasted with black powder, and the fumes were strong and blinding, so there must often have been delays after a blast before the ore could be removed.

"Heavy as lead" is a saying of weight, but John was strong enough to stand up to his task. No doubt when he returned home at night the cheese and the tea went rapidly down, and the homely mattress in an upper room felt good to his tired bones.

There were times of depression in the lead-mining industry in

those days, and a glutted market sank with all its sodden weight on Robert Oliver within a year or two after he had started his enterprise. The owners closed down the mine until such time as the plumbers and lead workers should have used enough of their product to create a fresh demand.

With this means of income dammed up the Olivers sought new outlets for their energies. Robert Oliver found it in odd jobs in which there was no room for John. The boy, having had a taste of the lead mine, felt that he had a partnership interest in providing for the family. There was a fair-sized patch of land attached to their house, and they conceived the idea of increasing their own poultry, and by the purchase of eggs from neighbouring farmers they could establish a business in Buxton. The donkey was exchanged for a pony, and John Oliver, poultry farmer, added that of huckster to his business. The farmers were probably glad to encourage him, and so he went from barnyard to barnyard and collected the eggs, and once a week or more with these and a little dressed poultry he trotted with his pony and cart to Buxton, where he sold them from door to door.

It was a novel experience and doubtless he enjoyed it. In all probability the good wives and housekeepers of Buxton were glad to welcome to their doors the sturdy and smiling boy, cheery of word and quick of wit, who for some months at least, became a regular visitor. It awakened in John the commercial instinct, and sharpened his faculty for rough-and-ready reckoning.

We can fancy that on fine summer mornings it must have been a pleasant experience to drive along the dales of Derbyshire and into the fashionable watering-place, where well-dressed gentlemen and ladies from England's higher circles came in droves to quaff the water from the sulphurous springs, hoping that by contracting mild colics they could purge away their dyspepsia and gout.

We should like to dwell longer on this picture of a ruddy-faced boy with legs dangling from the sides of the cart with its boxes of eggs and dressed chickens, as he urges his pony along and whistles on his way to market; but it was only a temporary phase in his career. The financial returns were meagre and living by odd jobs is precarious, so that, when the lead mines once more opened

up, Robert Oliver was glad to return to his contracts and John went back to his work with the truck.

Once more matters began to roll prosperously along, and prosperity brought disaster. As he prospered Robert Oliver raised the wages of his workers. This had two effects—it pleased Oliver and the men, but mightily displeased the neighbouring farmers. They found that the most industrious and skilful of their labourers were always ready to leave them to work for Robert Oliver; and those who could not do so murmured in derogatory comparison of the wage between the farm and the mine.

The English farmers of that day constituted a caste. Obscure to the landlord and reverent to the parson, they sought a balance for this subjection by demanding the same passive submission from their own labourers. In fact the very word labourer, denoting a lineal descendant of the serf, was a stigma of social inferiority. His dress was the symbol of his rank—a smock frock or corduroy or fustian trousers roped at the knees, a slouch hat, and a rough jacket. The farmers denoted their superior standing by fine breeches with leather leggings or gaiters, and warm topcoats buttoned to the chin for colder weather.

Even in the country inns the distinction was marked. There was a large, common hall with brick or stone floor, and high-backed wooden settles and plain, deal tables where the workman quaffed his small beer. The farmers gathered in the smaller taproom, where there were chairs and cushioned benches and a polished table from which they lifted their whisky and soda as they discussed crops and taxes, grumbled about the weather and the rent, blessed the Duke, damned his agent, praised the Queen, were indulgently tolerant of the parson, and cursed all Radicals and Trade Unionists. They had an advantage over the labourers, in that they were able to read, write, and figure sufficiently for their daily needs, but beyond that they were widely unread.

No doubt a group of such worthies gathered in the Hartington “pub” some sixty years ago and conversed in this wise.

“That mon Jenkins,” said Farmer Smith, glass in hand, “left me to-day to work for Bob Oliver oop i’ yon dom mine.”

Farmer Jones dashed off his whisky and soda, and putting his

glass on the table thumped it with a clenched fist. "Damn Bob Oliver, I saay. He's a beggar on hossback, he is. What right has he to be payin' waages as draws men off the farms? We'n a job as it is to mak' ends meet what wi' rent and tithes and road taxes, and if we're gooin' to be ruined by high waages where'll the labourers be then?"

"That's what I saay," said Farmer Brown. "Sp'ilin' their notions it is. Here we are all paayin' rent to the Duke, and his agent gooes an' leases this mine to Oliver. I saay we should goo to the agent and tell 'im that Oliver is spi'lin' all the labourers around here and making 'em discontented wi' their waages, and he ought to be stopped sumhow."

"We'll fetech that Oliver off his high hoss. We'll mak' him work for us agen yet," was an observation in which they generally concurred.

The "Duke" referred to was the Duke of Devonshire, whose great estate dominated the neighbourhood. He was usually considered a generous landlord who upheld the best traditions of his class. His property was too widely distributed for his personal attention, and the renting and collecting was left in the hands of his agents.

In this case the appeal of the farmers evidently succeeded, and (whether it was due to that alone or to other causes is unknown) when Robert Oliver's lease of the mine expired he was notified that it would not be renewed.

This happened on the verge of winter, and the men, thrown out of work, were unable to secure other jobs. Most of them had families to support, and hard times followed. The sufferings of that winter were indelibly impressed on John Oliver's mind. Speaking of it years afterwards he said :

"I saw children who wanted bread, and I saw my mother weep."

It was not surprising that all this aroused bitterness in the breasts of the Oliver family, and reawakened that slumbering resentment against the powers of landlordism and the privileges of the upper classes, voiced in the history of England by John Ball, and made tangible in the insurrections headed by Wat Tyler and Jack Cade.

The threat of the farmers that they would make him work for them again rankled in the mind of Robert Oliver, and he stubbornly determined that he would not.

"If this is the treatment one gets in England," he mused, "I want no more of it."

The upshot was that he decided to emigrate to Canada, and just then a circumstance occurred that enabled the entire family to carry out the wish in all its fullness. Mrs. Oliver had been left a legacy that was to fall to her on the death of her stepmother. In view of the position in which the family then found itself the executors and the stepmother generously decided to release sufficient of the money in advance to enable them to emigrate in comfort. Robert Oliver had a friend, a Mr. Goodwin, of Guelph, who had gone to Canada some years before, and on his advice he decided to follow.

The elder half-brother, Thomas Lomas, elected to remain in England, but John, at this time fourteen years of age, as the partner in his father's enterprise, shared his resentment about the closure of the lease.

"I never want to see England again," he said. And he never did.

Perhaps in that incident was the root of the Radicalism that for the rest of his life warred with the natural Conservatism of his temperament. To the end he hated the privilege and distinction of classes and yet resisted the Socialists and Trade Unionists and their programme of economic change.

Many years later a Duke of Devonshire, grandson of their former landlord, became Governor-General of Canada, and when John Oliver from Hartington became Premier of British Columbia, the Duke wrote his congratulations and expressed the pride that all the people of the old neighbourhood must feel in his attaining to such honour.

Premier Oliver replied in terms as courteous, and expressed the pleasure it would give him to receive the Duke on his next visit to British Columbia. This happened in due course. The great landlord of Derbyshire and the son of a humble tenant on his estate met as equals and friends, and the old feud was ended.

SCENE 3. EMIGRATION TO CANADA

ROBERT OLIVER must have felt like a second Columbus as with his wife and eight children he ventured out on the broad Atlantic in search of a new home in a strange land. To John, however, it was all very wonderful. He had never been much farther than Buxton in his life, and now he saw the great city of Liverpool with all its varied and teeming life—the crowds surging along the streets, the shops with vista-like length of counters receding into the dim unknown, the miles of wharves, the ships on the river, the sailor men of all races, the dusky and turbaned East Indians and the coal-black negroes—all made up a marvellous and novel sight to him.

And then the life on board ship. The dim depths of the steerage, the swinging hammocks, and the queer motion of the vessel as it began to roll on the swell. Very soon he had a queer motion in his stomach also. This was not so pleasant, but after a day or two it wore off, and he was able to enjoy the salt junk and hard tack again. It was fearsome food they served in those pre-refrigerator days. The stewards, like so many hog farmers, appeared in rough clothes and shirt-sleeves, carrying pails of thin porridge or salty soup which they scooped from long ladles into the tin plates of the passengers. They were given syrup with the porridge and sea biscuits with the soup. The biscuits the passengers smashed with their fists in lieu of a hammer. Potatoes were served in the jackets, but this wholesome preservative of mineral content was discounted by the passengers peeling them off with glutinous adhesions on their fingers. The peels were left scattered in little mounds over the long tables, so that when the meal was finished it looked as if the pigs had been rooting in the potato patch, and after gouging out the contents had scattered around the skins.

All this did not dampen John's enjoyment much. There were the walks on deck in the cold Atlantic wind, the dip into the great green valleys of water, and the lift to the foaming crests. In the cosmopolitan population of shipboard there were many Germans and Swedes. The men wore peaked caps and the women had shawls wrapped around their heads; and on deck

they would huddle around the hatchments where warmth came up from the engines, and talk in a strange tongue. It was all very wonderful and strange ; but it was stuffy below and cold above, and when they swung into the warmer airs of the Gulf of St. Lawrence they felt so much relieved that they cheered all the ships they passed up and down the river. They saw the valley of the St. Lawrence closing around, and to their right the citadel of Quebec gazed down on them from its lofty pinnae.

They landed at Point Levis on the opposite shore from the city. It was still early spring and the land had a desolate look. There were no leaves on the trees that crowded up the hillsides of the valley and the grass was still sere from the winter frosts ; but there was a warmer breath in the air and the indefinable sense of coming spring. The people were still wearing caps with flaps to tie down over the ears, and, like those on shipboard, they talked in a language strange to John, but it had a softer sound.

They boarded a train—a funny train it seemed to them ; because you did not enter by a side door and sit in the privacy of a small compartment, but you went up by stairs at the end of a car and entered a world of long aisles with seats on either side and washrooms, smoking-rooms, and all conveniences. It was like travelling in a public hall. Through the windows John saw a new land, where the houses were made of wood and painted white. There were neat little villages of these, each with its imposing church. Then it seemed as if for miles they travelled through leafless forests, where men were busy cutting trees and burning up piles of brushwood, and so making new gaps in the immensity. It seemed much colder than in England at that season ; but the men in the bush wore their caps with the ear-covers tied back, or some made of rabbits' fur with the tails dangling.

They worked in their shirt-sleeves, but did not roll them back to the elbow as was the custom of ordinary labouring men. Up in the higher places there were still thick patches of snow. There was a touch of alienism in the faces of the groups that met the train at stations, and they talked mostly in the strange French language, or in broken English offered their milk and eatables for sale to the passengers.

It was all very different from the land they had left behind. Instead of the green fields, brick houses, and the grey parish church, they saw the pastures still brown in spring, the stumps in the partly cleared fields, and the log houses in the shelter of the primitive wood lots. Instead of the stone dykes or the fat, green hedges, they saw the lean rail fences that looked like skeletons of hedges. Sometimes they were straight, sometimes they were sinuous, and here and there was a barricade of stumps thrown up on edge with clawlike tentacles of roots. The wooden buildings looked unsubstantial after the brick and stone. Still, they were comfortable, and as the summer came along the landscape changed. The pastures turned from brown to vivid green, there were strange flowers and birds and animals, and for John and his brothers and sisters the novelty had its charm.

The farm was near the Conestogo River, but the stream did not supply satisfactory water, so with John's assistance Robert Oliver dug a well near the buildings ; no doubt father and son throbbed with conscious pride when they had compelled old Mother Earth to yield up for all time this source of life and cooling that had lain so long hidden in her depths. The digging was followed by the cribbing in which John had a practical lesson in stone masonry that was afterwards to serve him well.

John afterwards became an expert well digger. He used to relate how one day, when he was at the bottom of a very deep well with the water gushing up above his boots, he looked up and saw the stars in the daytime. It was probably due to a rift in the clouds on a dark day, but it inspired him with the thought that if you work hard enough and dig deep enough the light will break through.

It was from such tasks that John learned to deify the pick and shovel and to speak with pride of all he had accomplished with them. For did not these humble tools tap the wellsprings of life, discover the hidden treasures of the earth, make the rough pathways smooth, and create gardens in the wilderness ?

"I have dug ditches by the side of Chinamen," he declared in his old age, and he said it not with shame, but as a matter of honest pride.

John's graduation as a Canadian farmer was rapid at this

time. At the age of fourteen he became his father's junior partner in the management of the farm. From the wood lot they had to cut trees for fuel, building, and fencing. There were stones to be prised out with crowbars and dragged on stone boats off the cultivated fields. There was the planting of the crops, the ploughing and harrowing, the cutting and storing for the winter months.

When he was about sixteen years of age his activities were painfully interrupted. It was harvest time and he was loading the sheaves in a waggon on the field. The smooth straw was slippery in the heat, and it was not easy to retain firm footing when the waggon jolted along. Suddenly one of the horses, a flighty animal, took fright and the team bolted. John was thrown from the front of the waggon face downward on the ground, and the wheels passed over his hips. He lay squirming on the stubble, and they had to carry him to the house. He was badly bruised, but no bones were broken. His strong, young constitution had in it all the elements of recovery, and after a few weeks of confinement and medical treatment he was able to resume his work, but for a long time he limped.

Robert Oliver, like many of the English peasantry of his day, had received, in all probability, a scantier schooling than his son, but native talent enabled him to calculate with accuracy in a rough-and-ready way. But, as John grew up with studious inclinations, his father was quite pleased to relinquish to him the tasks of written arithmetic involved in figuring out small contracts which he took from neighbours for digging ditches or wells or building foundations for barns. This change of occupation was more congenial to Robert Oliver than following the plough day by day, and on John, as he grew older, the management of the farm devolved more and more.

These specifications for contracts, and this taste of farm management were among John's best educational opportunities in his University of Hard Knocks. The proficiency with which he afterwards astonished learned men in making water-tight agreements, or solving at a glance the complications of intricate problems, had its roots in these years of adolescence.

The family funds must have been fairly exhausted by the time the farm and stock were paid for, and Robert Oliver grasped all

means of replenishment. He found one source of income in the limestone boulders scattered over the land. With John's help he dug a kiln like a well in a hillside. With much leverage and hard lifting they loaded the stones on waggons or wooden sleds and dumped them into the kiln.

When it was filled they hauled a supply of dried wood from the bush, and igniting it under the lime started the task of burning. For some four days and nights this ghat had to be tended, and John must often have sat through the midnight hours watching the flames curl up through the limestones while the grey smoke drifted off into the darkness. As he watched the smoke mingle with the stars what thoughts must have come to him.

"Where there is no vision the people perish," was a saying he loved to quote in his after days, and some vision of all this great land must hold for him must have come to him then.

The fire bit through the rugged boulders, releasing their life and latent heat, and when the vigil was ended and only the grey ashes remained, the stones crumbled into a white dust which, when water was thrown upon it, spat and scared the eyes with pungent smoke. It served its purpose nobly in cementing the stuff of which houses and barns were built to endure for generations to come. Robert Oliver and John derived a secondary profit in using it to build the barn foundations for which they took contracts from the neighbours. For John it was another lesson in utilizing the raw products which Nature had scattered so bountifully over this great primitive land.

SCENE 5. BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

WHILE John was helping his father to build foundations for barns, he was laying for himself foundations in other ways. The seed of his political faith was being sown by the newspapers he read. His father came from England with an aversion to that Conservatism which he regarded as the inalienable creed of the upper classes, so, when he arrived in Canada, he allied himself with the Reform Party led by George Brown, which he held to be the first cousin of British Liberalism. As a corollary he subscribed to

Brown's paper, the *Toronto Globe*, which henceforth became the family political guide. John imbibed its doctrines in his plastic years, and so became inoculated with the scrum of political strife in which he revelled to the last.

Eastern Canada had long passed the period of Indian fighting. The war of 1812 was of a past generation, the Fenian raid was only a memory, and as there was nothing at the time to serve as a blood-letting for the people's combative propensities, they turned for excitement to party warfare on the hustings or in Parliament. The Liberals called the Conservatives "Tories," and the Conservatives labelled the Liberals "Grits." Each name bore some opprobrium to the minds of opponents, though custom made them pleasant to those to whom they were applied. Both parties ardently believed (or pretended to believe) that their opponents were an amalgam of all that was cunningly crooked or fatuously inept.

Sir John Macdonald, leader of the Conservatives, was once cited as parodying Horace Greely, "I do not say that all Grits are horse thieves, but I feel quite sure that all horse thieves are Grits."

So another John in his youthful ardour was equally convinced that all the political wisdom and virtue of the time was embodied in the Reformers, and all the guile and incompetency was to be found in their foes. Election time found neighbours at daggers drawn, though when the excitement had calmed neighbourly relations would be renewed.

One of the burning issues of the day was the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway to link the Dominion from shore to shore. Sir John Macdonald and his followers favoured the scheme. Alexander Mackenzie, the Reform leader, and his followers regarded it as a Utopian dream which, if realized, would plunge the country into hopeless debt, and result in two streaks of steel rusting for thousands of miles through an uninhabitable wilderness. Mackenzie at best was inclined to proceed with Scottish caution by building short lines that would connect with lakes and rivers just sufficiently to tap the great west in the summer months.

What position the Olivers took on this particular question at the

time is unknown, but many years afterwards John Oliver, as Premier of British Columbia, found it necessary to review the whole history of C.P.R. construction, and it was the writer's duty to read the debates of the period and report conclusions.

"It seems to me," I remarked one day in the course of these studies, "that the Conservatives were right about this question."

"There's no doubt about it now," he agreed. "I sometimes wonder what Alexander Mackenzie can have been thinking about."

Whatever might have been his views then, there can be no doubt that there grew in John Oliver's mind a conviction that the railway would be built, and that conviction was a greater factor in shaping his destiny than he dreamed at that time. In the rosy glow of youthful imagination he saw a new and better civilization rising in the Far West, and the creation of golden opportunities in a land of young men.

In the meantime the work on the farm and among the neighbours went on. A schoolhouse built on the corner of the farm provided the younger children with the educational facilities of which John had had so little, and regular attendance at the Anglican church near-by inspired and fortified their moral rectitude.

As the years passed the old home longings that tugged at the breasts of the older people were subdued and to a large extent lost in new interests. Sometimes there must have come to Robert Oliver and his wife a yearning to see once more the green fields of England and the beauty of Dovedale. With women such associations are more powerful than with men, but of the yearning for home in the Oliver household we hear little. They were hard workers, they had good neighbours, and adapted themselves happily to the circumstances surrounding them. The barn raisings, the quilting bees, the church, the school, the little social gatherings, and all the amenities of the hard-working lives of the Ontario farmers weaned them from the old and established them in the new.

For John too there was a delight in this semi-pioneering, though it involved much hard work. His father and he built a new board fence along the front of the farm by the side of the road, and in line with it they planted a row of maple trees to ornament the

wayside. They also planted an orchard and watched it grow year by year to fruitage. Stones that stood out like huge scabs on the fields had to be prised out and removed, and John, looking over the smooth surface, felt as much pride as a beauty doctor who has restored pulchritude to a face deformed.

In the winter trees on the uncleared portion of the farm were felled—some used for firewood, some for building and fencing, and the culls piled for burning. In the summer, unsightly stumps, that had been left to rot, had to be removed with crow-bar and horse power. Then the holes that they left had to be graded and levelled, and so the farm was extended a few yards farther into the forest. John tasted the joy of the creative pioneer in this tentative pushing of civilization into the wilderness.

So the years of adolescence passed, and John in his busy life learned many things, but he never really learned to play. He did, however, learn how to handle a rifle and a shotgun and became a proficient marksman, which all had some bearing on his progress. A grouse or a rabbit contributed to the family cupboard, and a weasel or squirrel destroyed removed a pest from the farm.

In such spare time as he had he indulged his appetite for omnivorous newspaper reading. Here he laid the foundations for the political arguments in which his combative nature delighted, and if he sought powder for battle, rather than food for truth, he but followed the custom of his environment, and no doubt whatever favoured his side seemed truth to him. That he ever became a wide reader is not evident. The pressure of daily toil forbade excursions into the realms of history, philosophy, poetry, and romance. Such things were opposed to the doctrines of the hard-working farmer world, where they were considered a waste of time; but in spite of it his knowledge of Canadian affairs became considerable. In his rough-and-ready way he was a youthful philosopher in overalls.

In this manner things went on for five years after the arrival in Canada, when a great sorrow befell them. Mrs. Oliver was seized with rheumatic fever, which, in a short and painful space, wrung out her life. When the warm heart was cold and the diligent hand was stilled the family realized the bitterness of its loss, and none felt it more keenly than John, who, with his father,

had been her chief ally in fighting the battle of life in a new land. Far from the land of her fathers they buried her in the little graveyard of the Anglican church near-by.

Such events, unmarked by the world, are often catastrophic in the lives of families. Like geologic upheavals, they root out the old and bring up the new. I gather that his mother's death had an unsettling effect on John. The house was not just the same as before, and the discontent that so often seizes the young and spurs them to new adventure settled upon him. He was nineteen years of age. The hardest work in bringing the farm to a finished state had been done. His brothers and sisters were growing up, and a sense of crowding and desire for change gripped him.

His dreams of the Golden West were enlarged. The Canadian Pacific Railway was to be built, and at the far end loomed the mountains and valleys of British Columbia with all the treasures they might enfold. In Ontario he had followed the beginners, but there he could be in at the start of new things and become a factor in building up the last Great West.

He was now old enough to undertake outside jobs and little contracts of his own. If there was no job in sight he went in search of one. He saw the excavation ready for a barn some distance from his home. He went to the owner and asked if he wanted someone to build the stone foundation.

"Are you a stone-mason?" asked the owner.

"I can build stone walls as well as anybody else," said John.

The owner agreed to give him a trial and let him have the contract if he proved satisfactory. He had scarcely got started when a neighbour who knew him drove up.

"Who've you got working here?" he asked of the owner.

"That young Oliver isn't a stone-mason."

John, lime bespattered, looked up from his work, trowel in hand.

"I didn't say I was a stone-mason," he declared. "But I do say that if I can't build this wall as well and in less time than you or any mason you can bring along, I'll do the job for nothing."

The owner was amused at his assertiveness and told him to go ahead. And John, spurred by his own promise, did go ahead.

He battered huge stones into shape with a great sledge hammer, mixed up the pungent and steaming mortar, laid the stones in place, and applied the trowel with an energy that spattered him with feverous white speckles from head to foot. He did the work so well, and finished it in a time so surprisingly short, that the farmer not only paid him the full professional mason's wage, but gladly recommended him for other contracts. Thus he gathered sufficient funds to take him westward when the time was ripe.

So for a year or more after his mother's death John stayed around in the vicinity of his father's farm, but the family upheaval had uprooted him and he was much away from home. He was learning to shift for himself while gathering funds for the next migration. Still, he must have viewed with pleasure the growth of the trees he had planted, the land he had helped to clear, and the cultivated fields. The stock had increased to the capacity of the pastures, and his father began to talk of buying elsewhere and getting a bigger farm. This was not carried out until after John's departure, when the family moved to a larger farm in Grey County, where the youngest brother Joseph still lives. John felt the sense of crowding, too, and in the following year he resolved to move on.

SCENE 6. THE JOURNEY WEST

IN the spring of 1877 John heard for the last time the chattering of the jays in his familiar woods. When the crocuses were blooming in the pastures, and the sap began to swell the buds on the maple trees and the orchard he had planted, he left for the west. It could not have been without some regret that he parted from his family and the associations of seven years of crowded toil in the formative phase of life. But he had in his pocket one hundred dollars of his own earning, the air of spring was sweet, and the Red Gods calling. Before him lay the great adventure and the world looked good.

Throughout his seven years on the Ontario farm his opportunities for travel had been nil, and that journey west was a second revelation since the first momentous voyage from his native land.

He had to travel through the United States, and from the train windows he saw for the first time something of the growth and wonder of the Great Republic of which he had heard so much. He passed through Chicago, rising like a gigantic phoenix from its ashes on the shores of Lake Michigan, and saw the untamed cosmopolitan throngs that already crowded its streets. Beyond Chicago he passed into a new country, thinly peopled as yet. Instead of the little farms among the trees he saw wide, rolling prairies with settlers' cabins and stables islanded among seas of grass and freshly planted corn. It was a land of wider visions, but it was not for him. Those wide horizons probably oppressed him with a sense of strain, and in his heart he may have prized the shelter of the hills and trees of his Ontario home. Yet the change was not so great as it had been from England to Canada. Environment, climate, and people were somehow more alike, and they spoke with an accentuation of the familiar Ontario twang.

For many miles the boundless horizons opened around him, but as he got farther west the hills grew more rolling, the grass became browner and thinner and was spotted with tufts of sage brush. Then one morning he woke from his slumber on the train seat to see the mountains towering around him. All day long these castles of wonder, snow crowned, and with evergreen trees crowding up their rocky sides, flitted before him; and mingled with them were visions of smoky cascades or roaring waterfalls in chasms that stretched down into the abyss. There was a charm in watching the train wind like a huge snake around curves so sharp that from his seat he could see the engine and the baggage car side on. There were talks with fellow-passengers and meals snatched hastily at railway counters, and it was all a very novel and refreshing experience to John.

They ascended to a high altitude where the air was chilly and thin and the snow peaks around them brought back a touch of the winter they had left behind. Then came the descent of the Pacific slope, the air growing warmer with every mile until, in the Sacramento Valley, they plunged into midsummer heat. John saw the vineyards, the orchards, and the brown hills with the cattle upon them. They offered opportunities for work had he asked for it, but his ambition lay north and beyond. From Sacra-

mento he made his way to San Francisco with its wharves, its ships, its Chinamen, and cosmopolitan crowds. Here he took ship for Victoria, his ultimate destination in more ways than one.

SCENE 7. BEGINNING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

It was on a fine May morning in 1877 that John Oliver landed in Victoria. After the bare fields of eastern springtime and the brown hills of California he found himself in a land of verdure and bloom. Across the straits of Juan de Fuca the white-crested Olympics glittered in the sun, and far to the east Mount Baker rose like a great god in robes of white. In pleasant contrast were the gardens, the flowers, and the green grass in the open fields.

The town itself looked a mere huddle of buildings along the water-front. There was a square Parliament Building, painted red, to the south, and between that and the business section a wooden bridge spanned a tide flat where the majestic Empress Hotel now stands. Business hugged the water-front along Wharf Street, and behind it old-fashioned frame houses stretched back into the woods, which were broken by clearings and naturally open spaces. How much that city was to mean to John in his later life he little dreamed.

He saw in the life around him a replica of scenes remembered from early boyhood. There were men with top hats and side whiskers and tight-fitting pantaloons, and women sweeping the earth with voluminous skirts ; persons determined to introduce in a new land the customs they had loved in old England. For the greater part, however, the people followed the western mode of the day. The bowler hat prevailed with the business man, and a soft slouch accommodated the farmer or the woodsman.

Victoria, though small compared with its rivals to the south, was still a busy place. It had sprung up like a mushroom with the Cariboo gold rush in the early sixties to subside again as the placers were exhausted ; but now it was entering on a second life with the announcement that the long-expected Canadian Pacific Railway was to be built within a few years and Esquimalt Harbour near-by was to be its final western terminus. Survey parties for

laying out routes were at that very time being recruited in Victoria.

Here was work that would suit John Oliver. He was twenty-one years of age, about five feet nine inches in height, with Herculean shoulders and arms and a hand like a ham. His rather rugged face was honest and prepossessing. On the day after his arrival he applied to Mr. H. J. Cambie, chief of C.P.R. surveys in the west, for a position as axeman on one of the parties going out to blaze the route of the railway to the coast. Mr. Cambie looked favourably upon him, and he was promptly hired.

A few days later he and about a dozen others of the party sailed on the old side-wheeler *Sir James Douglas* for the head of Burrard Inlet, from where the survey was to begin. Under the shadow of a great rock they passed through the First Narrows, and the beautifully sheltered harbour of Burrard Inlet spread out before them. The great, coniferous trees seemed to crowd in and encircle it as if they would keep it free from all intrusion. Yet already the line had been broken in places. There was a large sawmill humming away on the northern shore, and to the south two others were sending up clouds of dust and smoke, and around them was a little fringe of wooden-shacked settlement lonely between the water and the woods.

In the shadow of the encroaching mountains they passed up the narrowing waters till they came to the end of the inlet at Port Moody, but they found no wharf to land at. They were lightered with their effects into boats; and a canoe, belonging to the survey party, was assigned John Oliver to paddle ashore. He had probably never seen an Indian canoe before, but with his innate self-confidence he tackled the job. Unfortunately the boat would not go straight ahead, but as he paddled away on one side it would turn around and cover its old wake. He spent considerable time in spinning around in circles to the amusement of the others, but stuck to it until at last he learned the knack and drove it ashore.

But his troubles were not ended. Dense as a jungle the bush crowded down to the shore-line, leaving a little cliff below the base of which and the water edge lay a fairly wide stretch of pebbly beach. On this the surveyors made camp for the night,

but before morning were awakened by the sound of the water washing around the bottom of the tent. They rose to find that the tide had risen and the water was all around them. They lost no time in dressing, gathering their effects together, and scrambling through the water to the bush, where, with wet feet and dripping legs, they spent the rest of the night. In the morning they found a more comfortable camping-place, and the real work of surveying began.

Their task was to stake out a route for the coming railway from Burrard Inlet to the Fraser River and up toward Yale. John in his hard-working life had probably never found work just as hard as this. With axe in hand he had to blaze the trail, climbing windfalls shoulder high or trailing through swamps where the mosquitoes rose in clouds to torment him.

"They were so thick," he remarked, "that when I pushed my arm through them and pulled it back you could see the hole."

Besides this, the vicious underbrush tore his clothes or whipped his face as he forced his way through. When they reached the Fraser River they found some settlement already in the valley, and for two weeks John slept in an old barn near where the railway now runs by Dewdney Station. The surveyors lived anywhere: in tents when necessary, in buildings when they could find any that they could use.

Hard as the work was, John thrived on it. He enjoyed the bannocks, bacon, and beans cooked over the open camp fire, and he slept well with nothing more than a blanket and some ferns or fir boughs between him and the bare ground. He had come determined to possess himself of a slice of this new country, and the survey gave him his chance to spy out the land. He observed that it was a region in which the law of compensation did not appear to operate. Where the huge Douglas firs raised their trunks and the timber was heaviest, the soil, when cleared, was gravelly and poor. On the other hand, where the alders and deciduous trees grew in the valley bottoms, the clearing was easiest, the soil the best. Nature had evidently designed that the poorer uplands should be conserved for the production of timber, and the richer bottom lands be cleft by the plough.

SCENE 8. THE ALDER-BOTTOM FARM

JOHN finished that season's battle with windfalls and mosquitoes a thinner man with a fatter purse. He had earned sufficient to justify him in securing a piece of land and starting for himself. His first idea was to get a timbered place that could be easily cleared.

With this in view he pre-empted 160 acres in Surrey municipality, near where Sullivan Station on the B.C. Electric Railway to Chilliwack now stands. It was always referred to afterwards as "the alder-bottom land," suggesting a dark, peaty soil, and slim, grey-barked deciduous trees, which in shedding their leaves for centuries had manured the land beneath.

John, in coming of age, seemed to have come into his own, and one can imagine the pride with which he viewed this first land that he had ever owned. Were not those trees his to their greatest height; his with their wealth of bloom and shade—to cut, to burn, to build with, to fence? And the soil down to the very centre of the earth was his to command. Why, there was something possessive even in his view of the clouds that floated above his land. How he visualized this land, cleared of its trees and with stumps removed, a place of green, fenced fields set around buildings stocked with cattle, horses, and poultry, and all that went to make a prosperous farm.

But John learned to realize with Matthew Arnold, as he often did in later life, that :

"The tasks in hours of insight willed
Must be through hours of gloom fulfilled."

He was an excellent axeman, and that winter he set himself with a will to the work of clearing enough space to build upon it the following year.

His choice of location was influenced by Isaac Johnston, a former Ontario neighbour, who had already taken up a quarter section in the same district, and it was on Johnston's place that they batched together through John's first winter in British Columbia. Mr. Johnston later married John's cousin. They are

still living in New Westminster, and both recall those days quite clearly.

“We used to pack our groceries on our backs all the way from New Westminster,” Mr. Johnston told me. “John was a great shot and helped us out with the grouse he killed, and we also got one deer. I have seen him draw a revolver from his pocket, point it at a grouse, and shoot it clean through the head or neck.”

This packing food from New Westminster meant far more than these few incidental words imply. It was a distance of twelve miles over a rough trail through thick woods, and it was necessary to cross the wide Fraser in a rowboat to reach the town. Yet over all this distance John Oliver would carry on his back part of a quarter of beef or a hundredweight of flour. The worst burden he complained of was a five-gallon can of coal oil. It swished and churned with the motion of his body and was hard to hold in place, and it had a way of leaking through the stopper and flavouring everything it touched with a pungent perfume.

To carry a hundred pounds on your back for one mile is no light task, and when it came to twelve miles it is obvious that it must have necessitated many rests, so that the twenty-four-mile walk empty and loaded constituted a long and hard day's work. One can imagine the sigh of relief with which the beef or the flour would be dropped on the cabin floor.

They had a cooking stove in which they baked their own bread and boiled or fried potatoes and roasted their meat. John was an excellent cook, and could flip a flapjack over as neatly as anyone. They also did their own washing in the old-fashioned way, rubbing the clothes fist on fist.

Through the short winter days John was busy on his own place clearing the bush and culling out the best logs for future buildings. These logs he trimmed and squared, and when he had a sufficient number he called in his partner to help him, and they levered and tugged them to the site he had selected to build upon. Here they were notched to lie one above the other and lifted into place, and soon the unchinked walls of a good-sized cabin were rising in the woods. For the framework of the roof, poles were trimmed and jointed to meet like an inverted V, and there was nothing to be bought save windows and lumber for the door, partitions, and

floor. These he was able to get with the aid of a neighbour provided with better means of transportation.

Into this cabin also John built with his own hands a substantial stone fireplace. He had hopes that one of his sisters from Ontario would come out to keep house for him, and consequently that first cabin was of more generous size than is usually required by a bachelor.

The following winter he moved into this new abode and Isaac Johnston joined him there. In the summer he had gone down into the more-developed farm lands at the Delta of the Fraser, and secured such jobs as he could to provide him with cash to carry on.

In the winter he and his partner carried on the clearing of their land. It did not require much to keep them. John's gun provided them with part of their fresh meat, and three times a day they would eat the potatoes grown on a cleared spot of the homestead. For the rest their fare was simple. Oatmeal mush, spread with syrup, and a fried steak made a good breakfast. At noonday a roast or a boil with rice or dried apples sufficed, and for supper some cold meat and fried potatoes with syrup and bread and butter to follow supplied their wants, while tea, even without milk, was a satisfying draught at every meal.

At least everything tasted good to John after a hard day's logging with his axe in the bush. Every day brought down its number of trees and let a little more daylight on his land. The trees had to be trimmed and the slashing piled for drying and burning with the culls, while the better logs were built in orderly piles for future sale or use. At night it was pleasant to get into the cabin and light the fire and the lamp, and after a warm supper to read by the crackling fire in his open grate until sleep overpowered him, and he sought unconsciousness between the blankets of a hard-bottomed bed which nevertheless seemed soft to him.

The furnishings of the cabin were simple. Besides the cooking stove and home-made bedsteads, there was a table of their own construction, boxes or chairs to sit upon, a few knives, forks, dishes, and cooking utensils. They cut their fuel from the bush, coal oil was cheap, and they had no water or light bills. For

clothing, cottonade overalls, mackinaw jackets, high rubber boots for wet weather and coarse leather for the dry, sufficed.

John was not yet well enough off to start farming in a whole-sized way. So far he had bought no livestock, but fought his way bare-fisted. His plan was to live on his homestead, work out at such odd jobs and contracts as he could get, and keep clearing his land in the intervals. In this way, by the time he had sufficient land cleared, he hoped to earn enough to stock his land for a start.

SCENE 9. HIS FIRST PUBLIC OFFICE

IN Surrey, where John was located, a municipal government was being organized. Settlers were arriving in advance of railway construction. Some had families and desired a school for the children. A meeting was called in one of the farmers' houses for the purpose of bringing pressure on the Provincial Government to build a school and supply a teacher.

Young John Oliver attended and, to the surprise of the farmers, though he had no children to send and it spelled only addition to his taxes, he proved the warmest advocate of the proposed school. He realized the value of the education of which, through circumstances, he had been deprived.

He helped to draw up the petition, and a little later a reply was received from the Provincial Secretary to the effect that if the settlers would build and equip the schoolhouse they would supply the teacher. The result was the establishment of a rural school within the next three months.

These manifestations of public interest on John's part soon brought other duties. At the age of twenty-six he was appointed Clerk of the Municipality of Surrey at a stipend of \$125 a year. He was, in fact, more than clerk. In so small a community he had all the executive duties of the Council to carry out, and he was assessor and tax collector also. The municipality had no funds to begin with, and supplied John with no books, so he kept the accounts on scraps of paper and such stationery as he had on hand.

He did other work for the municipality. A rough trail had



JOHN OLIVER AT THE AGE OF SEVENTEEN

been blazed through the bush to the shore of the Fraser River to give settlers access to the little town of New Westminster on the opposite side. It was necessary to make this trail passable for horse-drawn vehicles and tenders were called for. The only one submitted was by John Oliver, who needed the money for his farming operations. He was given the work and engaged the help necessary to carry it to completion.

There was brush to cut out, stumps to remove, and holes to be levelled so that a buggy or cutter might pass safely over. There was grim satisfaction in punching a hole through the wilderness of wood, in letting the sunshine come through and releasing the land from imprisoning centuries of shade. Obstructions had to be removed, like foes in battle, with steel and powder, and afterwards consumed by fire. John was in the battle line marching breast forward.

He found it, perhaps, easier to fight the forces of Nature than to deal with some of the difficulties of his public office. His duty as tax collector was by no means an easy one. The municipality had the right to impose a tax on wild land held by speculators for a rise in value, and they exercised it to the full. But most of these owners were absentees. They were scattered here and there, some at great distances, and though all were notified, there were many excuses and collections were scarce. John was persistent, and had better luck with those he could reach, but as these consisted of the settlers and cannery men in the neighbourhood it did not add to his popularity. The tax gatherer is still confounded with publicans and sinners, and when it was found that the net result of his collection was sufficient to cover his own road contract and little more, suspicion began to arise, especially among the councillors themselves, who must bear the public blame for results.

Meanwhile John found the work of clearing his alder-bottom land progressing but slowly, and in spite of his dreams, he began to long for more open spaces.

Below Surrey lay the Delta lands which the Fraser had drawn from æonian hills in the interior and deposited in rich alluvial layers, separated by fingers of the muddy river before it entered the sea. Owing to frequent inundations this land lay level and

almost free from timber, and when clothed with the rich, green grass enchanted the eye of the pioneer. The better and higher parts had already been occupied when John Oliver came ; but on the shores of Mud Bay, spreading a briny arm from the Gulf of Georgia, he found a quarter section still open for pre-emption at the moderate price of a dollar an acre.

No one had taken this land because it was littered with drifted logs from the sea, and spotted with salty sloughs left by the high tides that occasionally flowed over it. John saw the richness of the soil and its inexhaustible supply of moisture. He visualized the possibility of dyking it to keep back the tides, and in spite of the warnings of other settlers he resolved to take possession.

At the same time he found a customer for his partly-cleared alder-bottom farm. He sold it to a Mr. Turnbull, a carpenter in New Westminster, who bargained to repay him in part by building a house on John's new farm, as soon as he should require it.

It was in the fall of 1882 that John moved from Surrey to his new place on the delta. This necessitated the resignation of his municipal clerkship. The suspicion easily fostered in rural districts, where rough angles of character are not rubbed off by constant contact with other men, seemed to have found some lodgment in the minds of certain of the Surrey Councillors. John Oliver had not collected all the taxes they wanted, but had gathered sufficient to pay in full for his road contract.

More than that, John Oliver was then, as throughout his life, a blunt-spoken man, and there is a rough kind of honesty that makes enemies as well as friends. The Council demanded an audit of his accounts, and though this was probably a legal necessity, they appear to have added to their demand a personal suspicion.

Mr. H. T. Thrift, who is still a resident of the province and well remembers the incident, was engaged to make the audit. That incident is best related in his own words :

“ I was informed that he had all the books (?) at his shack down in the delta. Among other matters I was instructed to be particularly careful in going through the accounts, as those members of the Council who came to me expressed themselves they had no confidence in that John Oliver.

"I may say that I went through the accounts as I should have done without the special injunction, but I failed to find any account books except a copy book and a few sheets of foolscap and scraps of paper submitted, but I did find that John had made desperate attempts to keep the accounts correct and in good order with the materials supplied to him.

"I submitted a rather elaborate report which did not reflect much credit on the Council in its dealings with employees in a responsible position, but it did, as fully as I possibly could, do justice to the quality of the work performed by a man who had evidently done his best without tools or materials."

That report was accepted as a clear vindication of John Oliver, and those who knew him best declared that they could not put anything over "Honest John," in which, perhaps, was the genesis of a title he wore through thick and thin to the end of his days.

That experience as municipal clerk marked the active beginning of a public career destined to span nearly half a century in his adopted province. It gave him a taste of collective responsibility and proved the value of accuracy and care in public transactions.

SCENE 10. THE DELTA FARM

THE farm which John pre-empted in the Delta lands proved a siren which, with seductive charm, had lured him to a long and terrific fight. In the sunshine its prairie levels, green and radiant and dappled with the pools which added to its charm, looked inviting to eye and hand, and beyond stretched the black tide flats of Mud Bay as if testifying to the fertility of the soil until it was drowned in the sea. But if you tasted the pools they were briny, and the land contained logs, roots, and debris that had floated in from the sea to be congealed with the soil.

John's first task was to build a cabin to live in. There were no logs on his land except sea drift, and it was necessary to buy lumber and haul it from New Westminster. With the revenues from his odd jobs he was able to do this, and also to buy a team of oxen and a waggon to haul with.

That first pair of oxen must have been at once a source of pride

and exasperation to John. Those smooth-haired big creatures, with the patient stupid eyes, the inoffensive horns, the heavy dew-laps, sturdy shoulders, and some fifteen or sixteen hundred pounds of muscle, bone, and viscera, were all his. They were slaves to care for and to multiply his power. But they were not always obedient slaves, and they could be as slow in their movements as gigantic snails. No doubt as they crawled along over the rough roads between his farm and the river John often flashed his whip or let out a good, hearty oath. But he got out his lumber, and on what appeared to be the safest part of his land he built the cabin which was to be the beginning of his future home. !

As implements for a start he had his trusty pick and shovel and axe, and he bought a walking plough to break up the sod. He also made a set of harrows that served his purpose with poles cut from the neighbouring bush. These he sawed and trimmed to the required size. Then he mortised and nailed them into squared frames, and through these he drove the harrow teeth and set them firmly. It was a crude implement, but it cost little and it served.

First, with oxen and chain, he dragged off the driftwood that lay upon the surface and piled it for burning. It seemed simple after that to stick the plough into the sod, and with the weight of his oxen to tear it up ; but the process uncovered a nest of obstructions that rose at him like snakes. Embedded in the soil were great trees with jutting knots and scrawny boughs reaching out like defiant claws. It was necessary to spend days digging around and underneath these boles, and sometimes they had to be sawed in pieces before the oxen could drag them out. They were either piled to be dried and burnt, or such parts as might be useful for building, fencing, or fuel were carefully laid aside. It was a rule of his to utilize every scrap that could be saved from waste.

Over those Delta lands the winter rains of the Pacific Coast fell heavily ; and there were days of drizzle and cloud in which John toiled among muck and mire in the foggy light to clear up his land so that he might soon have enough under cultivation for his first crop. One can picture him now, broad-shouldered, mud-bespattered, in long rubber boots, rough overalls, and mackinaw

coat, standing up to his work. He enjoyed rugged health, and slight illnesses of colds or headaches never made him pause. In the shanty were his stove, bed, table, and a few chairs. There he ate his bachelor-cooked meals of fried bacon and eggs with his own home-made bread, and there on the winter nights he found some cheer when the fire was crackling and the oil-lamp lit, and he could sit and read his newspapers in peace.

He dug some ditches to drain the water off, but as the high tides bit the outskirts of his farm he saw that he could have no security for crops without dyking. He did not at first attempt to dyke the whole farm, as that was a task entirely beyond his means : but selected about twelve acres around his cabin, and threw up a temporary dyke to the seaward side. It was built of sods and earth ploughed up from his own land, and was just sufficiently high to hold back the sea, which, flooding over long shallows, struck there with subdued force. It was work that meant much digging and scraping, and hauling the earth to where it must be heaped in a mound of sufficient thickness several feet high. It entailed tremendous labour, but at last it was done.

In the meantime he had succeeded in removing obstructions and levelling a few acres, which he worked down with the harrows, so that he was able the following year to sow his first crop of grain. With pride he looked on that field redeemed from the wilderness, and with confidence he scattered the oats or wheat over the black soil and harrowed it in. He watched fondly for its growth, but in spite of the richness of the soil it came up thin and straggling and with no promise of abundant yield.

He sought for the cause and a tide that overflowed his land at that time told him. When the tide receded he saw crystals and patches of white among the grass, and knew that the saltiness of the soil, which permitted the growth of a certain kind of grass, forbade any hope of good cereal crops. Years afterwards he told a gathering of learned men the story of how by spiritual insight he overcame material handicaps.

“ There are men who scoff at the supernatural, but I am not one of these. I believe that men can still see visions and dream dreams. I know that in those days I used to have dreams night after night in which I saw the grain sprout up in my land only

to wither and die, and I saw also that the land was white with salt. Then another night in a kind of trance I had another vision. I saw a great rain descend and dissolve the salt and wash it away. The problem of raising crops on my land was solved there and then.

"I had no money, so I cut ditches with a spade and put in wooden drains at stated intervals. The winter rains came and washed away the salt through those drains, and the following year I had the finest crop of oats I had ever seen. That was the start of underdraining in British Columbia."

All this is somewhat in advance of the narrative of his life. Neither the amount with which he had started to clear his bush land, nor his subsequent earnings, was nearly enough to get him established, and for a year or two he had to leave his land at intervals and work elsewhere to get some ready cash.

To the Canadian Society of Technical Agriculturists he afterwards told the story of those early struggles.

"When you look around the Delta country to-day you see a country of fenced fields and beautiful homes, but when I first came there in 1878 I had to travel along a path so covered with brush that you could hardly get along on horseback. My first job was with Mr. McKee. It was his first crop, and as there was no machinery he hired me to cradle oats at \$1.50 a day and board, and then we had to thresh them with a flail. McKee tried to haul his grain from East Delta to Ladner, and the only way he could do it was to first send a waggon loaded with straw to fill up holes in the road."

The cradling was done with the old-fashioned scythe with attachments for gathering the straw in bundles as it was cut and so leaving it ready for binding. The binding was done as in the days of Ruth, and the threshing by the swing of the jointed flail. The work was hard and the days were long, but all had no effect on John Oliver's iron frame.

He worked for another pioneer in the district, long and familiarly known as "Bill Ladner," whose memory is preserved in the name of the district town on the shores of the Fraser River. One of his jobs for Ladner was to bale hay in a sweat box with a team of oxen. He was working at this when Mr. Ladner came to them

and said that one of his cows was mired in Canoe Creek, and unless rescued before the tide came in it would be drowned. The men went over to find the cow fast in the mud and with the water rising rapidly around its body.

"We found the only way to get the cow out," said John, "was to put a rope round her. To adjust the rope a man would have to go into the water head first and reach down. I was that man and my mate held me up by the heels while I fixed the rope, but we got the cow."

It was not a dignified picture, this of John Oliver held heels up with his head among the water and mud, drawing that rope around the belly of a cow, and one can fancy that he came up spluttering with the watery mud dripping from his hair and whiskers, but they "got the cow."

So he struggled along, working out at times and at others subduing his homestead with oxen and plough. Doubtless he had many a struggle with his horned team. His tiller was a rope on each outer horn with the ends in the hands that gripped the handles of the plough. Often they defied his tugs, though fortified with oaths and a whip. At sight of a tempting bunch of feed or some fresh water in a pool their stomachs would drag them from the furrow, John and the plough following. Sometimes they dragged him up to his knees in water, and oaths would fly and perspiration fall as man, oxen, and plough were involved in a whirligig of ropes and chains, of bellowing and shouting. It was only when tempers were cooled and patience restored that they could be guided on again.

As soon as he could afford it he went over into the State of Washington, where horses were more plentiful, and bought a light team. It was another step upward, and one can imagine the pride with which he surveyed them. There were speed and strength in the trim legs and flanks, and he could stroke and talk to them as friends. Even the glint of the new harness with its shining leather and glittering buckles filled him with satisfaction and pride.

With these more tractable animals he could whistle at his work. The plough went smoother and swifter, and the black patches on the pre-emption grew wider and longer.

The worst trouble he found with the horses was that their hoofs would sink in the mud in rainy weather, and the struggles of extrication were followed by weariness. To overcome this he tied gunny sacks around their feet, so that they would not sink so sharply, and later he had them shod with "tooley" shoes, flat wooden shoes strapped to the hoofs and spread out to form a wider footing.

It was shortly before this that he and a Mr. Woodward, a future father-in-law, took a contract for getting out fence posts for R. T. Williams, at this time of writing an alderman of the City of Victoria.

It was a winter job, and in order to be near their work they lived in a tent. They were struck by a spell of cold unusual for that region. Their potatoes and vegetables froze, and in that condition they threw them into the pot so that they would not be rendered uneatable by a natural thaw. Gun and rifle provided them with meat, and in the nights when the snow or the icy rain would beat down upon their tent they slept soundly and warmly under the thick blankets that covered them.

A short time ago Mr. Williams was reminded of this contract.

"Yes, I remember it very well," he said. "I had land in the district, but was living in Victoria. I had offered \$40 a month for the work of getting out the posts. John Oliver offered to do it, but demanded \$45. I knew he was a good man and agreed to pay him that amount, and I must say I got far better value for that \$45 than I would have been likely to do from anyone else for \$40. In all my dealings with John Oliver I found him thoroughly honest and satisfactory."

Honest John realized that a good name was better than great riches, and though he by no means despised the wealth, he would never sacrifice his good repute for the sake of it. So he slogged along in the mud or the dust, making his part of the wilderness a little fairer, and finding his consolation in a day's work well done.

SCENE II. MARRIAGE AND HOME

SOME four or five miles distant from John was the home of Mr. Woodward, who had come out from Cheshire, England, in 1870, and had taken up land near the Fraser River. He was a widower and had two daughters to keep house for him. One of these, Elizabeth, was a winsome lass of twenty or thereabouts. The family kept the post office for the district ; and it did not take John long to decide that this was the best place to get his mail, in spite of the fact that business naturally called him to New Westminster much more frequently. The punsters of the neighbourhood teased him about mixing "mail and female" in his very regular trips to the post office. They also asserted that he cut a trail through the bush to make a nearer road between his farm and the Woodward place. At least he was always a believer in the mathematical axiom that a straight line is the shortest way between two points and he took it.

There were no doubt delightful conversations as Miss Woodward handed out his letters and papers to John, and the result was an acknowledged engagement. Mr. Woodward did not like the idea of losing his industrious daughter, but personally he could find no objection to John ; and in their courtship there appear to have been few of the obstructions that impede the course of true love and give novels their excitement and zest. There were no stern parents to object, no social, racial, or religious barriers in the way, and both were bred to habits of rural industry.

John Oliver was a blunt-spoken, well-built, upstanding young man with a prepossessing face and a ready wit. He appeared to have no vices beyond emotional outbreaks of temper and some swear words when crossed, and even these on the whole rather tended to humanize him. On the other hand, he neither drank strong liquor nor smoked, and was in so far the possessor of all those negative virtues on which in his heart he placed no great value.

"It's not what you don't do. It's the thing you do that counts," was his philosophy. And so on the affirmative side he was always ready to help a neighbour and worked hard and unselfishly to advance the interests of the community.

While his bluntness sometimes bruised it saved him from any suspicion of priggishness, and then was he not always "Honest John"? So that while Mr. Woodward may have regarded him as a robber in his hen-roost, he could take no exception to his character and registered at the worst nothing more than an unobtrusive protest.

John felt sure enough of his ground to call on Mr. Turnbull to carry out his bargain in the purchase of the alder-bottom land and build a house for him. Soon a two-storey building arose above the flats of his farm in all the glory of new lumber and sweet-smelling cedar shingles. John was preparing a good cage before he brought home the bird. When it was finished his fiancée would ride on horseback occasionally through the bush from her father's place to help him in tidying up the old house and preparing for the new, and one can imagine the pleasure with which they discussed arrangements for fitting out their future home. Mrs. Oliver said afterwards that on those rides through the woods she seldom met a human face, but one can well believe that these were happy journeys in the springtime of life.

John and Miss Woodward were regular attendants at the church services held in the nearest schoolhouse, and if he sometimes peeped through the closed hands of prayer in her direction, it was human enough to invoke providential forgiveness. The minister used to come to the Woodwards for tea after the service, and on one of these occasions, following a quaint old English Sabbath custom, they were quietly married. Only the necessary attendants and immediate relatives of the bride were present, and when it was all over they went directly to their new home. There could be no honeymoon in their busy, pioneering life.

His marriage seemed to open a new era in John's life. The empty and echoing rooms of his new house became radiant with a woman's personality, the blink of the bare windows was curtailed and softened, while little feminine ornamentations and comforts soon converted the bleak house into a home. It was pleasant for John to come in from the hard work in his fields to be met by his smiling bride and sit down to a well-cooked meal, and when his day's work was done his chair seemed a little cosier and

the house a little brighter than it ever was in his palmiest bachelor days.

As the years rolled by John often had reason to think that he had been fortunate in his choice, for in her he found a helpmeet of the old Victorian kind. She loved the religion of her fathers and patterned her life by it. Like Solomon's ideal wife the heart of her husband could safely trust in her. She looked well to the ways of her household and ate not the bread of idleness ; but sought the wool and the flax and worked diligently with her hands, so that in time her children would rise and call her blessed, and her husband be known in the gates when he sat among the elders of the land. For character can shine in the butter and the biscuits, the ordered household and clean and healthy children, not less than in the marshalled sentence or the swelling fugue.

In one respect Mrs. Oliver did not share in her husband's activities. Of a gentle and retiring disposition she did not join in his participation in public affairs. No doubt she felt pride in his ability, and rejoiced in his progress to prominence, but for her sufficient were the household cares, the rearing of children, and the domestic responsibilities of the farm. " He for the plough, and for the needle she." Each to his or her place.

If Mrs. Oliver did not stand by her husband's side in the forum, at least she was always there in the battle for bread. Year by year that fight went on with varying success. The storms of winter beat upon their home, the floods of summer ascended and overflowed their dykes. They were borne onward alternately to prosperity and backward toward ruin. They toiled in the heat of summer suns and the nip of wintry winds. In clouds of dust or bogs of mud the war was carried on ; and as the years rolled by the conquest was won and maintained, and the land that the pioneers had despised became one of the richest farms of a district unusually rich.

SCENE 12. JOHN OLIVER, P.M.P.

SETTLED down to married life John worked out less frequently, and set himself wholeheartedly to the development of his own farm. He found his partial dyking unsatisfactory. In odd seasons high tides would overflow the undyked portion of his lands and destroy his crops ; and, though his drainage would take out the salt again, it meant the practical loss of a whole year's work.

As an offset to these crop losses he bought a few cows and went in for the rearing of beef cattle. He had plenty of grass and fodder, and the place seemed well adapted for beef production, but the sloughs and low places, when beaten into bogs by the winter rains, proved veritable cow traps. Time and again the mushy earth drew the animals into itself, and like a black strangler choked out their lives.

John did not give up cattle on that account, but turned to hogs as another side-line. He grew oats, barley, and wheat for feed, and with the grain he mingled the mangolds and turnips which grew to monstrous size in his fertile soil. These he sliced or pulped in a hand-turned machine, and through another grinder he crushed the grain which formed the staple of his feed.

Pigs are notably prolific, and soon John was surrounded with a squalling, nozzling, guzzling multitude which greeted him with joyful grunts and squeals when they saw him approaching with the laden pails, and he found it hard to beat them back with a stick. As they grew in numbers it was necessary to enlarge and spread out the pens so that the place took on the semblance of a hog ranch, and a neighbour dubbed the owner "John Oliver, P.M.P." or "Proprietor of Many Pigs."

Many years afterwards a political opponent declared, "Old John is all right feeding the hogs, but when it comes to running the country he is a good farmer." However, when John finally changed his P.M.P. to M.P.P., and became in reality a Member of the Provincial Parliament, he found it required more courage and a bigger stick to withstand those who would guzzle, if they could, at the public trough than it had done to beat back the hogs on his Delta farm.

Pigs, like human beings, suffer from overcrowding, and in about a year John's herd was stricken with a disease that decimated their numbers and brought him heavy financial loss. After his losses with the cattle he began to think that the plagues of Egypt were befalling him, and if, unlike Pharaoh, he did not harden his heart, at least he stiffened his lip and battled along.

A baby came to them to add something to the cost and much to the joy of living, and they seemed to be on the way to recover their losses when a worse misfortune befell.

SCENE 13. THE GREAT FLOOD

ONE of the drawbacks of John's farm was a shortage of fresh water. There was too much brine beneath the soil and around to admit of satisfactory wells, and pipe lines had not yet been laid, so it was a daily task to take team and waggon to a spring in the foothills about a mile away and fill his barrels. The barrels were clumsy to handle, so he built a wooden tank on wheels which he could fill through a hole in the top and drain from a bung-hole behind. Thus he managed to get along until such time as he could make gravitation work for himself through a mile of pipe.

If he suffered from a shortage of fresh water he suffered more severely still from a superabundance of brine. The sea tides had always been his worst enemies, and on one occasion they nearly overwhelmed him.

One day in a summer of the late eighties a great tidal wave came beating up with wind and rain. Helpless, John saw it surge over and through his dykes. He hustled the stock into the barn and joined Mrs. Oliver, who, with her baby in the lower room of the house, was gazing through the windows in terror at the vision of approaching destruction. Under the lash of the wind and the beat of the rain they saw it creep up toward the house and buildings. The cattle moaned in the barn, the pigs squealed, the hens cackled in alarm.

As the tide continued to rise they did not know whether they might all be drowned or not. Up to the door of the house came

the remorseless flood and the water filtered through the cracks to the floor. Slowly it spread over the boards, and they heaped all the food and utensils on the table and shelves and took refuge upstairs. At one time the water rose two feet above the floor, but fortunately never quite reached the level of the table.

Through the rain-draped upper windows the family could only gaze in terror at the flood which had changed their farm to a lake in which house and buildings stood out like solitary islands. John thought of the stock, but there was nothing to be done. The barn floor was raised well above the ground, and it was not likely that anything would be drowned.

Before night the tide receded, so that only a few inches of water remained on the lower floor, and John in gum boots was able to splash through the brine almost to his knees to reach the barn. He managed to give some fodder to the stock and bed them on the floor, which, though damp, was now above the level of the flood.

But while there was water everywhere there was not a drop for them to drink. John had probably never read the *Ancient Mariner*, but he soon realized that an abundance of salt water could be much worse than no water at all. Even after the flood had drawn back into the bay and the land was clear in spots where the cattle might graze, he heard them moaning by the briny pools with their plaintive cry of thirst.

For four days and nights the family were compelled to remain upstairs. They managed to get a little cooking done on the stove in the kitchen in spite of a few inches of water on the floor, and as there is a dry core in the wettest wood, they got warm food.

When that tide finally subsided it left a scene of desolation. The land was covered with salt like snow, the crops were ruined, and it was impossible to get in a supply of fresh water through the flooded country round about. Food became scarce, and John with his gun brought down wild game, or dug up clams on the neighbouring shore to serve them for meat. While there was no water for the cattle they had reserved a little for human needs.

The value of water to life was brought home to John with terrific force in those days. He saw the ribs of the cattle showing, he heard the hogs choking as they tried to munch the dry feed, and watched them weaken day by day, and it seemed as if even

the cluck and cackle of the hens was dried up as they moped in pitiful fruitlessness.

After eleven days of this drought and starvation John was able to make his way to the spring. He kept going until he had sufficient water to allow the cattle to drink their fill, and he saw them resting on the ground and chewing the cud of contentment as they had not done for many days.

SCENE 14. DYKING AND THRESHING

It was then that John resolved to dyke his land more effectively. He had not sufficient funds to do it himself, and he disliked the idea of borrowing ; but the very life of his farm depended upon its protection from the sea.

Other neighbours had suffered, and it was proposed that the municipality should build a general dyke along Mud Bay, and assess the cost in taxes against the land. The proposal required the consent of the landowners, and when it was placed before John Oliver, to the chagrin of the others, he refused to place his land in the scheme.

It was always his way to refuse to allow the community to do anything for him that he could do for himself, and with his innate self-confidence he felt that he could do better work than anyone else could do for him. Afterwards he found that it would have cost him less had he gone into the municipal scheme.

By this time he had obtained title to his land, and was in a position to borrow on his security. He decided to dyke the whole side of his farm facing the tides. To throw up a mound of earth, two yards or more wide and some six feet high for a length of half a mile or so was no light task. It was impossible for him to do it alone, so he hired half a dozen husky Swedes and they set to work.

One of the men writing recently said : " When I first came out here I worked for the *late* John Oliver, but he was *early* enough in them days."

Those who worked for John usually realized this. It was a case of early and late.

They had no machinery beyond ploughs to tear up the earth

and horse-drawn serapers to drag it to the dyke, and each night they emerged from their work like dusky gnomes. Here and there they encountered boggy spots that had to be filled to get a solid foundation, but John would not be beaten. The obstacles were overcome, and after weeks of gruelling toil the dyke was finished and his farm was so much safer from the rushing tides. The problem of draining had already been dealt with, and he had a sense of security such as he had never felt since first he homesteaded there.

The work drained his finances severely, and he said that it took him six years to make up the money he had paid out in wages ; but the wall of earth stood firm, and he was able to worry less and devote himself to other tasks.

His crops for the year had been destroyed by the flood, and the rains of the coming winter were needed to wash out the salt through his drains and restore the old fertility. In the meantime he had to make something to carry on.

As there was not a threshing machine in the district John decided to stretch his credit further, and buy one to thresh for his neighbours. He secured one of small dimensions, operated by a horse treadmill. Light as it was, it was difficult enough to get around over the muddy roads in a wet fall, and he used to tell how, on occasions, he had to rig up a " Spanish windlass," a log with holes bored for spokes standing in an upright frame of poles. Around this log a winding rope would drag his machine out of the mire where a horse could not find footing. It was crude as threshing machines go, and was operated by two horses, toiling always uphill and pressing the endless slats downward beneath their feet, which, turning wheels within wheels, kept the small separator humming. Still it was infinitely speedier than the flail, his machine was in great demand, and John prospered.

In those days he toiled among the dust and straw with chaff in his nostrils, and a cloud of flying grime around him that turned his tears to ink and his spittle to tar. He slept with the horses in the stable or on the hay in the loft, but he had known harder beds and this did not trouble him. He went out a white man in the morning to return a begrimed and bewhiskered negro at night.

The following year his land, cleansed by rain and drainage,

bloomed with abundance once more, and to meet his own demands and his growing custom he bought a larger steam-threshing outfit.

He must have looked with pride on this monster of smoke stack, tubes, wheels, and pistons. Here was a thing compounded of metal woven into intricate patterns, yet all working in unison—a thing cold and dead and yet to be warmed into a fierce semblance of life when heated by roaring fires and vibrant with hissing steam.

John had pride in taking out one of the first engineers' certificates for a thresher yet granted in British Columbia. He drove the engine himself, and acted as general repair man for his machine. There was a thrill in guiding and releasing the torrent of power which flowed through the long belt to the howling mill, where the sheaves were torn to shreds in the iron-toothed cylinder and the grain came pattering down through a spout while the straw was hurled in dusty heaps from the farther end. The first steam thresher in the Delta district—it moved, a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, from farm to farm, and John Oliver had the pride of a man who feels his own strength supplemented and enlarged as by some elixir poured into his veins to magnify the power of his muscles a thousandfold.

In the threshing season the days are short and the toil is long, and it was after the dusk had fallen that the thresher seemed to take on an aura peculiar to the night. Showers of sparks were vomited, like exploding rockets, from the smoke stack, the glow of the fire flashed forth whenever John opened the engine doors to stoke it, and the sound of its roaring struck farther afield.

All this industry was suddenly interrupted. The thresher had been left, standing idle on a neighbour's farm, for the Sunday. In the afternoon the Oliver family was busy preparing to go to church at the schoolhouse when Mrs. Oliver, looking out through the window, saw a light on the neighbour's farm.

"John. The thresher is on fire !"

The alarm dissipated all preparations for church. They rushed out to the scene, but the fire was already gutting the separator, and nothing could be done. All that remained was a blackened and smoking mass of junk. It was characteristic of John that he took the family on to church just the same. Still it was a heavy

blow, as it represented a loss of a thousand dollars or more. However, the engine was left, so he bought another separator and continued to pound out the grain, determined that present efforts should make up for past losses. With begrimed face and hands and fuzzy whiskers he raised clouds of dust from farm to farm until his loss was repaid.

SCENE 15. JOHN THE BUILDER

JOHN was always averse to speculation, but he kept an eye open for bargains that promised him some profit in return for his work. Among his other acquisitions was the purchase of a wood lot with some good timber on it a few miles from his farm. To utilize it he bought a small portable sawmill, which he could run with his threshing engine and so convert the trees into lumber for his own use. Incidentally he might, by cutting for others, make it earn enough to pay for itself.

Some of the biggest trees he felled with axe and saw. After they had crashed to earth he trimmed off the boughs and with a double-bitted axe shaved off the bark. He once gashed his leg badly while engaged in similar work, and though it made him limp for some time, such accidents seldom kept him long from his tasks.

With leverage and horse power he got the logs to his mill, where he ran them through the circular saws and converted them into boards of suitable size. He told of one occasion in which he took a raft of logs down the Serpentine River, and riding on top to guide them, was almost carried out to sea, logs and all.

He stacked his boards to dry and, when seasoned, proceeded to build them into his barn.

For the foundation frame he squared the logs, mortised them, and with wooden pegs jointed them firmly together. Uprights for the sides were also hewed from the rough, and for the rafters he cut fir poles tapering to an inverted V. Rough lumber from his mill did for the walls, and so, with no further cash expenditure than was necessary for windows, door hinges, fastenings, and nails, he built the barn, the foundations of which stand sound to this

day. One can imagine that he surveyed with pride the finished work of his hands.

In addition to this, from his wood lot he cut the posts and rails to fence his fields, while the bountiful sea threw driftwood on his shore which he could use for firing and odd purposes. He endeavoured to utilize everything that lay to hand, for the years had taught him the need of hard economy.

Many a time in those years the fight for food had been fierce. There were times when he had no money to buy meat and little for groceries ; but poultry, eggs, and milk he could get from his farm, and if need be, he would replenish the pantry with his gun or gather clams from the mud flats. The keen appetite begotten of hard toil in the fresh air made all things palatable and digestible, and " the rugged all-bountiful earth " with which he lived in daily communion never failed to supply its sacramental bread and wine both for bodily and spiritual sustenance.

" My rule in life," he once said, " has always been to try and make the best of conditions. I had no experts to tell me. I found it out for myself, as adversity was my best teacher. Early in life I learned that man is the most adaptable animal the Creator has placed on earth, and this valuable lesson I have tried to teach my sons."

SCENE 16. THE HURRICANE

JOHN's Egyptian plagues were not yet numbered. It seemed as if all the sprites and demons inherent in Nature were after him. There had been the drowning of his cattle, pestilence among his swine, a fire had eaten up his thresher, and floods had rolled over his farm. Having seemingly exhausted their quivers on earth, the powers of destruction next mounted on the clouds.

The British Columbia coast region is normally free from tempest and cyclone, but one of these rare visitors picked upon the Delta country for a disastrous call some two years or more after John Oliver's farm had been overwhelmed by the tides.

In an autumn evening a strong wind swept the plains, and by the time the family was in bed it had swollen to a destructive

hurricane. It was just after the harvest, and the stacks were levelled in its path while the air was filled with flying straws, dust, and withered leaves. It was a thicker darkness superimposed upon the night. In their beds the Oliver family heard its roar while the house creaked and swayed. Outside was the sound of crashing timbers as the roof of the uncompleted barn was swept away. The darkness prevented any appraisal of the damage, but when the dawn broke and the tempest had died they gazed upon a scene of desolation where the barn had stood on the previous day. The roof, torn from its foundations, had fallen in a mass of wreckage, and the hay was scattered far and wide.

Fortunately there was no loss of life, but to a struggling family like the Olivers the loss was severe enough. Where there had been housing and fodder for their stock was a wilderness of splintered timber and twisted beams, and the hay that had taken weeks to gather was scattered beyond redemption.

With John the loss went still deeper. The structure that had meant so much in the planning of his brain and the toil of his hands had vanished in a moment. From the green trees on his wood lot to the finished product it had been the child of his labour, and his hopes were scattered in the wind.

Mentally he must have wrung his hands for a day or two, but he was electric with vitality, and was soon up and at it again. I always thought he had something in kinship with the spirit of Thomas Carlyle, and like that hero, after his "French Revolution" was destroyed, he gritted his teeth and started to do it all over again.

He had still his wood lot and his sawmill, and though his second effort had neither the charm nor the freshness of the first, he did not pause till the barn was rebuilt in stronger and better fashion than before. Fortunately, the old foundations had stood firm, and by so much lessened the work of rebuilding. The old barn has long been superseded by a more modern structure for the housing of the stock, but stands to this day, serving as an implement shed for the farm.

SCENE 17. A THIEF IN THE HOUSE

As John continued to improve his farm he found his taxes rising. The assessor estimated that his place was of such value that he could afford to pay more than his neighbours. John saw in the improvement the result of his own thought and labour. He appealed to the Court of Revision on Assessments, and entered a vigorous protest. Why, because he worked hard and used his judgment, should he be penalized for this thrift while less progressive neighbours were left untouched?

"But, Mr. Oliver," said the judge, himself a farmer, "you must admit that your land is richer and more productive than these others you speak about?"

"That may be," was the reply. "But who made it so? Did you ever try mixing brains with your soil?"

The judge probably called him to order, but he got his reduction.

It was in the course of this progress that the Olivers began to surround themselves with a few of the luxuries of civilization. The family was increasing and this necessitated additions to furnishings and surroundings; and as the new bedstead or chairs or cupboard came in, after their years of toil and self-denial they must have been received with a glow of honest pride.

One day John went to New Westminster and returned with a new buggy shining with paint and trimmings for Mrs. Oliver's use, and there was a pair of new shoes for the baby and other little knick-knacks for family use. Mother and children must have gone out to survey that new buggy with tribal pride, but the pleasure was dampened by an anti-climax on the following morning.

John rose and went out to the barn, early as usual, to return a few minutes later with a puzzled and sober face to Mrs. Oliver just beginning to make preparations for breakfast in the kitchen.

"Lizzie, your horse and buggy are gone."

This was disastrous, but it was not quite all. When Mrs. Oliver went into the pantry she found that a churning of butter, part of a baking of bread, and a quarter of beef had also disappeared. The thieves had not only taken her horse and buggy, but had also provided themselves with food for a picnic in the woods.

John lost no time in telephoning the police at New Westminster, and set out himself in pursuit of the robbers. He followed the buggy tracks till they were lost in the road, and then went in the direction they indicated, but the wily burglars eluded him. The horse was afterwards found wandering in the woods a few miles away, and years later the seat of the buggy was discovered in the bush near the banks of the Fraser River. The rest was hidden in mystery.

Having lost the buggy John at once bought a heavier vehicle and proceeded to recoup his loss by its aid.

SCENE 18. THE STOIC PHILOSOPHER

THE grim, fighting spirit of John Oliver was illustrated by many occurrences. He delighted in the tussle with Nature, and when he got the worst of it bore it with a grin.

When he felled a big tree on his wood lot and heard it crash down through the smaller trees to the ground he felt like a modern David who had slain a Goliath of the woods. Like David he was not content to let his enemy lie there, but proceeded promptly to cut off its head. Then the boughs were lopped off, and with a one-man cross-cut saw it was reduced to logs of suitable size for hauling. With horses or oxen it was drawn to the mill or dropped into the stream for floating down.

His next task was by leverage and chains to work the log on to a stand from which he fed it through circular saws that cut it into boards. These rough boards were then passed under a planer that left them smooth. It was in feeding the planer that John's arm got into the machinery. Before he could stop the engine with his free hand, the shirt-sleeve and flesh of the other arm were ripped down in shreds. He bandaged it as best he could and went home with the blood dripping, for more effective treatment. The following day he went back to work again, and though his arm must have been hot and smarting, kept at it until completely healed.

One day, while jolting along on his disc harrows, he was seized with a sudden attack of pleurisy that sent hot stitches up and down

his side. It paralysed his arm, and he was obliged to draw in toward the house and tie up the horses. He went into the kitchen and Mrs. Oliver promptly heated a small sack of salt. She asked him to lay off and go to bed for the day, but this he stubbornly refused to do. She bound the hot salt to his body, and with this warm bulge on his side he went back to his seat on the harrows and was soon cutting up the soil again. With each jolt the pain prodded him afresh, but he toiled on.

This stubborn resistance to pain and adversity characterized him all his life. He had moments of despondency and seeming despair, but they never lasted long, and on recovery he was more eager than ever for the fight.

Though John was a stoical, he was by no means a solitary man. Throughout these years, while his farm was being improved and his prosperity increasing, his family had been growing, and there were now five sons and three daughters. It was a fairly large quiverful, and gathered around the family table they formed a goodly company. Visitors tell you that there was an air of health and cheerfulness about the Oliver family that was good to see. This was due no doubt in large part to inherited constitutions, plain and plentiful fare, and the wholesome surroundings of country life. In addition to this Mrs. Oliver was an excellent cook, and those who enjoyed her hospitality will tell you of the luscious cakes and crisp biscuits that were spread before them.

John liked company, and would show his visitors around his farm with justifiable pride. He was fond of animals, and kept two collie dogs which helped both with the hunt and with the herd. He loved to tease the household cat by offering it a piece of meat on the end of a fork, which was slyly withdrawn as puss advanced, only to be thrust forward tantalizingly again while John chuckled at the animal's contortions and arching back.

He had an unfailing sense of humour, but at times could exhibit a Spartan sternness. On one occasion some boom chains belonging to the Municipality of Delta had been left on the shore near the Oliver farm, where they had been used in bringing in a boom of logs. The boys and a visiting friend, young Gilley from New Westminster, saw the chains lying there, and decided that it

would be a good opportunity to use them to gather in some shingle bolts that were floating in to the shore, and which they might sell to some profit.

John was Reeve of Delta at the time and felt a particular pride in his care of municipal property. He walked around the shore in the evening and saw that the boom chains were missing. He soon divined the cause, and, though he might have forgiven an ordinary boyish prank, the thought that anyone should be able to say that Honest John took public property and used it for his own purposes stung him.

When he got home the boys were in bed, but the next morning he sat down at the breakfast table and gazed like a thunder-cloud at the family gathered there.

"Which of you lads wants to go to jail to-day?" was his grim question.

The crestfallen boys looked furtively at each other, but there was no response.

"I want to know who took those boom chains," he demanded with a thump on the table. "Did you, Charlie?"

"Charlie" was singled out as the mischief-maker of the family, but neither he nor any of the others offered any reply to this pointed question.

"Very well," he said grimly, "if those chains are not back in their place in twenty-four hours I shall telephone for the policeman at Ladner and you can look out for yourselves."

The boys knew their father well enough to realize that this threat was no bluff, and as Mr. Gilley told me afterwards:

"We did as much work in getting those chains back that day as we had ever done in two ordinary days."

In fact, while John Oliver loved his family and would sacrifice much to their welfare, he could, when necessary, enact the Roman father, and was no believer in the doctrine of "spare the rod and spoil the child." His own experience had convinced him that easy compliance was not the path of progress, and that it was necessary at times to stiffen his essential kindness with the iron of justice.

In spite of a quiet religious strain in his nature it always struck me that in those days he must have been somewhat of an Old

Testament Christian and rather admired the stern decrees of the Mosaic Law. While the Sermon on the Mount may have appealed to him in exalted moments, I think he regarded "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" as more practical in the crowded ways of life.

An illustration of this occurred a few years later. He was returning from New Westminster market one night by train and had some money in his pocket. He got off at Colebrook Station, and was just turning into the road leading to his home, when two men sprang out of the bush and one held a revolver in his face.

"Hands up!" was the sharp command.

For once John's fighting instinct deserted him. He said that revolver barrel within a few inches of his eyes looked like a six-inch cannon about to explode. So while one man covered him the other went through his clothes, and, after abstracting about forty dollars and his watch, bade him a fond farewell and disappeared.

John, crestfallen and humiliated, rushed to his house and telephoned the police. The next day a man carrying his watch was arrested near Blaine. He said that he had bought it cheaply from another man. He was tried and sentenced to five years imprisonment and twenty-four lashes. His companion was not caught.

A little later John was travelling on the train with his neighbour Robert McKee, and fumbling in his coat pocket for something he drew out a revolver.

"Why, John," said Mr. McKee, "you shouldn't be carrying a thing like that around with you."

"Waal," said John in his slow, grim way, "I was held up once, and the next man that tries that on me'll get the contents of this into his skin."

Fortunately, John was not held up again, so that there was no need for him to carry out his homicidal intention. He was an accurate revolver shot and would probably have tried to "wing" a robber if given half a chance, though he would most likely have avoided firing at a vital spot.

"There seems to be some compensation in everything," he once remarked. "If a man is strong in some points he is sure to

be weak in others, and you never really get anything you don't sweat for."

"You must have read Emerson's essay on Compensation," I remarked.

"No," he replied. "That's just how I've found it."

It was customary on the farm for the family to rise at five in the summer and six in the winter months. There were the horses to be fed, cleaned, and harnessed, the cows to be milked, and all the abundant chores of the farm. Then breakfast and afield with plough or harrow or drill.

It was pleasant in the cool of summer mornings to look out over the green and fertile fields of the Delta, to see Mount Baker to the east, white and radiant in the rising sun, while the lions of Vancouver, snow-capped and majestic, guarded the sea gates of the great city that was rising to the north. Pleasant too was the smell of the soil as it rolled in furrows of buttery blackness from the mouldboard of the plough, but not so pleasant the ache and pain of trudging after the harrows on the hot and dusty days. Still, John's law of compensation held, and the pains and privations of the farmstead emphasized its pleasures.

By this time he had advanced. His dream of a snug set of farm buildings was realized. He no longer scattered his seed by hand or cut his crops with a cradle. A drill dropped the precious grains into the earth in neat and regular rows, and a self-binder, a monster with tireless iron arms, cut the grain, gathered it into sheaves, tied them with a deft twist of steel fingers, and then with a leap-frog motion kicked them contemptuously down on the stubble.

John had a love of machinery, and was thrilled by those things that added so much to his strength. No doubt it was a joy to him to guide the binder drawn by three or four stout horses, to see the standing grain fall from the knives on the running canvas, and to hear the click of the knotter as the finished sheaf was thrust forth. How much that triumphant onward sweep must have told him of aching backs and arms as the scythe had bitten inch by inch into his crop in the olden days, and the slowly gathered swaths were sheaved in bands of straw.

So we see him with a farm completely stocked with machinery.

Not only had he the drill for sowing and the binder for reaping, but he had also the thresher to separate the grain from the straw and leave one ready for the market and the other for fodder.

All this was attained by years of toil. He once said that it took thirty years to put him on his feet. He was probably reckoning from a very early age, but it is true that the processes of Nature are slow and the farmer's success is often interrupted by mischance.

All this time John was not neglecting his education in public affairs.

"Some day," he told himself, "I'll have a go at it."

He took in newspapers from all parts of Canada and scanned them. Often after a hard day's work on the land he would sit after supper in his chair and read himself to sleep. In spite of himself the strain of the day would pull down his eyelids, sag his head, and draw the paper from his hands.

Sometimes the noise of the children would awaken him, and a thunderous command for silence would follow, which was obeyed—at least until he got to sleep again. In such a tired condition he was apt to be irritable. However, in spite of toil and sleepiness, a retentive memory digested much of the political knowledge of his time and country and he was ready for the next move.

SCENE 19. THE TRAIN HOLD-UP

IN his later years John used to record, with a chuckle, how on one occasion he held up a train single-handed.

A horse had strayed from the farm in the afternoon, and he set out on foot to recover it. He kept dodging in and out from the Great Northern Railway, thinking he had found a trace of it here and there. He continued the pursuit until darkness settled around him, and he found himself on the railway track about twelve miles from home. Clouds were gathering fast and rain was threatening. On either side of the track the woods were dense and black. It seemed that he must strike back for home with his weary legs or spend the night in the bush. He had no mind for either. He remembered that a freight train was due to pass in a comparatively short time. But how to stop it was the question.

He had no lantern or means of signalling in the dark. An idea occurred to him.

The rain was beginning to patter down softly, but he gathered some fine wood from the bush, and after paring some shavings with a pocket knife soon had a bright fire blazing in the middle of the railway track. The train came booming along through the night. A fireman's head was thrust over the side of the cab.

"Say, Bill. There's a fire on the track straight ahead. Guess we'll have to pull up."

"Darn their skins," grunted the engineer as he closed the throttle, "and we're only just on time."

The fire blazed up brightly, throwing sparks through the fine rain into the night, and soon the train was stopped. The conductor hurried excitedly from his caboose at the rear and joined the engineer and fireman in extinguishing the blaze, and cursing and wondering who started it.

"Some durned hobo, I guess," said the conductor. "I'd like to catch him." And he very soon did.

While all this excitement was going on at the front a tired, black-bearded man was chuckling as he climbed into the caboose at the back. There were one or two other passengers in the car and he nodded a smiling greeting.

"A good job that fire was on the track or I might have had to stick the night in the bush."

The train started again as the conductor returned to the caboose and looked angrily around.

"I'd like to know who started that fire on the track?"

"Wall, if you want to know, I did," said John with a calm smile. "I had no other way of stopping you, and I wasn't going to spend the night out there in the rain."

"You're a nice man, you are," returned the conductor. "Don't you know you could be jailed for a thing like that?"

"Tut, tut, man," said John. "Nobody is hurt, and I knew you fellows would be glad to give me a lift if you knew all about it."

He proceeded to tell his story with utmost good humour and the conductor's anger gradually changed to amusement. John got safely home and bought a box of cigars which he distributed among the train crew. The Great Northern Railway Company

probably never heard how their train had been stopped in the night.

SCENE 20. A MILITANT REEVE

IN spite of John's years of solitary toil his gregarious instincts and ambition for public life were never subdued. A regular attendant at church and school meetings, an active participant in municipal elections, his interest in public affairs increased with his knowledge. That early experience in a municipal clerkship had given him an insight into the problems of local government which proved a rudimentary education for a wider political field.

He was one of the first school trustees of his district, and had served but two or three years when he was elected to the Council of the municipality of Delta. From that position to Reeve was but another step. In all these offices his keen, analytical mind, ready wit, and close application to detail proved valuable to a community in its formative years.

It was said, however, that while he had refused to enter the municipal dyking scheme himself, he afterwards became a strong supporter of public dyking. This change may have been due to altered conditions, new view-points, or as some unkindly suggested because "now John had a hand in it himself," a hint at the Reeve's love for running things in his own way. He was also a supporter of new roads, but all had to be within the municipality's financial means.

John was never wanting in brusqueness or pugnacity, and in his public position these qualities created enemies. Among these was a neighbour named Edward Goudy. He was a giant of a man, nearly six feet six inches in height, who rented a farm not far from John. He appears to have been of the rough frontier type seen in cowboy movies. He quarrelled with John about a stream which crossed the road near his place and afterwards went over John's homestead. Goudy wished to divert it to run alongside the road, and John demurred. As Reeve he took his Council out to view the proposed point of diversion. Goudy was there. After some words he moved over toward John like a tower with clenched fists, saying he would fix him.

John calmly drew a loaded revolver from his pocket and pointed it at Goudy, who stopped transfixed in his tracks.

"I was just expecting something like this would happen," he remarked, "and I'm ready for you. I want this Council to know that if at this or any other time you try to come it rough over me I'll let you have as much of the lead in these bullets as I can pump into you."

As John screwed up his mouth in determination, and held the gun in his big, cool hand, Goudy retired muttering. He had no trouble with him after that.

John was so successful as Reeve that friends and neighbours urged him to run for membership in the Provincial Legislature. This was in line with his ambition, but he demurred. He read newspapers from all quarters and had followed for years the discussions in the Legislature at Victoria. The accusations of graft and dishonesty suggested his course. He told me afterwards :

"I might have been in politics years before, but I determined I would keep out till I was in a position where the motive for graft could not be fixed upon me."

He explained his position more fully to his friend George Murray, of Vancouver, who wrote an article about him for the *Grain Growers' Guide* of Winnipeg. Mr. Murray asked him how he came to be called Honest John. He replied :

"I am only an average man, not much better or worse than other men. I am no saint and no purist, but I haven't an enemy in British Columbia who can truthfully say that John Oliver ever profited one penny from his connection with the public affairs of this province over the past forty years.

"When I came to this country as a young man, I got a free homestead. We worked and cleared that homestead and got the title to it. The soil was productive. I always went about in politics a good deal. After the campaign I could always return to the farm and find my crops were still there, the fruit ripening on the trees, and the stock no worse off than when I left.

"With some of my friends it was different. They were young business or professional men, often lawyers. They gave over a good deal of their time to politics to the sacrifice of their business.

After a campaign some of these men came back to find their affairs in bad shape. Under these conditions, when those interests which endeavour to control Liberals and Tories alike came along with campaign funds, the townmen often fell before the temptation offered. I didn't fall, because I didn't need to. I was taking my wealth from the soil whether the party was in or out of power. When I refused to stand for some of the methods of the late Sir Richard McBride someone started it and the name has clung, ever since, of Honest John."

In the meantime his family was growing up and the eldest sons were approaching manhood. He was resolved that they should not lack the advantages of the education he had been denied. Robert, the eldest, was destined for a doctor. Two others, Joseph and John, studied for law. Charles was to become a chemical engineer. The second daughter, Nellie, became a school-teacher. The second son, Arthur, preferred the farm, and still lives on the old homestead.

He wished all his boys, who desired it, to have University training, and to that end he hired a tutor, Mr. Maxwell (a professional teacher), for whom he built a cottage on the farm where he could live with his family and give the boys their preparatory lessons. As high schools and colleges were not as numerous then as now John probably calculated that this was the most economical manner in which he could give them their pre-University training.

He was helped out in these plans by a sale of land he made about this time. In the swampy area of Pitt Meadows a few years before he had purchased a parcel of land at a low price. He probably had an idea that he would need it for one of the boys.

Discussing it with Bruce McKelvie, the well-known British Columbia writer, some years afterward, he said :

"My idea was that if I underdrained that land in the same way as I had my own farm it would be just as good."

"Why didn't you do it?" asked McKelvie.

"Some damn fools wouldn't let me. The real estate boom came along just then, and they offered me thousands more than I could ever get out of it, so I took it."

Thus he was furnished with funds to give the boys the Univer-

sity education he wished them to have. So in turn they went to Toronto and graduated for the different professions they were to follow. John, the third son, after studying for the law, decided that he preferred the farm after all, and is still living in the neighbourhood of the old family homestead.

Thus far briefly we have followed John Oliver—the chubby lad working in his father's lead mine or peddling eggs in England ; the youth on the Ontario farm taking his first lessons in pioneering, growing into manhood, and doing stonework and odd jobs to earn the money to come West. We have seen him in a new land smashing bare fisted against the forest and the sea, and forcing his way to a position of financial independence.

In these years Nature also worked her way with him. The quick, impulsive boy had set into the stolid and stubborn farmer of his young manhood. The young farmer had become the stocky, squarely built, middle-aged man, in whose dark beard and head the first grey hairs were beginning to show. Thirty years of toiling had left him massive and strong as a tower ; and, his pioneering done, he was ready to carry the fight into the next arena.

SCENE 21. ELECTED TO THE LEGISLATURE

It was in the year 1900, at the age of forty-four, that John took his long-contemplated plunge into the swirling waters of British Columbia politics, and truly it was a troubled stream. Since entering Confederation the province had had twelve administrations, with an average life of less than two and a half years each. At this time its turbid waves were ridden by a stormy petrel known popularly as "Fighting Joe" though officially styled "the Honourable Joseph Martin, Premier of British Columbia." His administration was destined to break the record for brevity. On 28 February, 1900, he took office, and in about three months his Government was defeated at the polls.

There was no party Government at the time, and the election was fought between Martinites and anti-Martinites. John arraigned himself with the Martinites, and succeeded where most

of his confrères went down to defeat. Just why John Oliver took the stand he did I have never heard clearly explained.

Martin was brilliant and erratic, of indomitable courage but disastrous judgment. He had come from Manitoba, where he had occupied the office of Attorney-General for a few years, and had distinguished himself in leading a successful fight for the abolition of the official use of the French language and of the system of separate schools for Catholics and Protestants. The latter had brought him national celebrity, and was a major issue in the Dominion election of 1896, when the Liberals under Laurier succeeded in defeating the Conservatives after a tenure of office lasting, with one interruption, since Confederation.

Martin removed to British Columbia and was soon elected to the Legislature as a member for Vancouver, where he had established a law office.

Joe Martin was not a man of prepossessing appearance. He was excessively corpulent. His features were irregular. He had a seraggy beard, a hooked nose, and a blotchy complexion which extended over the top of his bald head. His sharp, black eyes were deep set under bushy brows. His appearance added no charm to his leadership, and he was far from being universally friendly. He bristled with pugnacity. He mingled with vindictiveness an impulsive generosity, and was at all times fearlessly outspoken. He revelled in the publicity that blackened all his blots, but in which his honesty stood out in clear relief. Left to himself he might have accomplished much ; but hitched in the team he kicked right and left, and the energy that should have drawn the load was lost among split shafts and tangled traces.

John was probably attracted to Martin's following by that worthy's fighting force and his zeal for certain measures of reform. One plank of his platform was the abolition of the \$200 deposit which a candidate for the Legislature had to make as a guarantee of his standing. It was a comparatively small matter, but to John, as a man of moderate means, it may have appealed, and there were other measures of weightier importance. One of these was Martin's pronouncement in favour of aiding the construction of a railway from Kootenay to the coast that would give

Fraser Valley farmers, like John, access to a fine home market in the mining camps of the interior.

Martin had not started his Premiership auspiciously.

Lieutenant-Governor McInnes had called on him after the defeat of the Semlin-Cotton Government in the Legislature. The choice was so unpopular that the members, by a vote of twenty-eight to one, passed a resolution condemning the action of the Lieutenant-Governor in calling on a man in whom the Legislature had no confidence. Hardly had the motion been carried when his Honour came in to prorogue the House. The members rose and left in a body, so that Joe Martin was the only legislator left to hear the Lieutenant-Governor's prorogation speech. Whether he sang the National Anthem or threw a waste-paper basket at the head of the nearest official is not recorded. He may have felt like the throwing, but it is a safe assumption that his mood was not melodious enough for singing.

As members of the Legislature would not serve under him Martin had great difficulty in forming a Cabinet at all, so he wandered through the highways and byways of the province and arbitrarily selected such as would suit his purpose. Not one of them had any administrative experience, but Fighting Joe was an old schoolmaster, and evidently had the idea that he could train them to his liking.

His selections added nothing to his popularity or prestige and it was evident that they were all headed for defeat. All this did not deter John Oliver, who loved an uphill fight. He had stiff opposition in two opponents. One of these was the Speaker of the House, the Honourable Thomas Forster. The other was J. W. Berry, a successful farmer, a young man of good ability and a formidable foe. To-day Mr. Berry sits in the Conservative ranks in the Legislature as representative of the same riding, and Mr. Forster still lives there in retirement.

John waged a vigorous campaign under discouraging circumstances. He lacked tact and this soon brought trouble. At a Queen's Birthday celebration at Boundary Bay he was called upon to speak, it being tacitly implied that party politics should be taboo on such an occasion. John mounted a waggon, feeling farmer-like at home on such a platform. His first words were :

“Ladies and gentlemen. As you know, I am a candidate for the Legislature in this——”

He got no farther. He was greeted with a chorus of boos and catcalls, and in spite of his efforts he could not make audible the words in which he would probably have explained that he was merely stating his position preparatory to a declaration that on this occasion he was going to forget it. He descended rather crestfallen, but soon plucked up his spirits again and continued his campaign as vigorously as before.

The Columbian newspaper of New Westminster, a consistent opponent, declared that John Oliver was making poor progress, that following his picnic blunder he was going through the district addressing meetings in schoolhouses with an attendance of five or six.

In spite of these drawbacks the reputation and natural ability of Honest John told, and when the polls closed he was declared elected by a majority of ninety-four over his nearest opponent in a total vote of less than eight hundred. There was rejoicing among the old farmers of the district who had known him throughout his struggling years. It was regarded as a personal triumph in the face of a disastrous Martinite reverse. In a House of thirty-four, less than a baker's dozen of the followers of Fighting Joe were elected. Of his ragbag Cabinet only himself and one other survived. He resigned, and his remnant of a party went into Opposition to the Government of the Honourable James Dunsmuir, the millionaire coal-mine owner, who succeeded to the Premiership.

SCENE 22. HIS FIRST SESSION

His first session in the Legislature at Victoria was a thrilling experience to John. He came there with his store clothes and rural habits, fresh from the byre and the field, and found himself seated in a marble-panelled chamber with lofty ceilings adorned by statuary, and a floor covered by a gorgeous, red carpet emblazoned all over with the coat of arms of the province, and

inscribed with the motto "Splendor sine occasu." I expect those words puzzled John not a little, nor was he satisfied with the explanation of a fellow-member that it meant "Splendid carpet which never fades." By leaving out the word "carpet" and substituting "splendour" for "splendid" he arrived at an approximate understanding of its meaning.

However, these things interested him less than the human surroundings. There were the ceremonies of the opening day—the Lieutenant-Governor in gold braid uniform and cocked hat, the naval and military officers splashed with red and blue, the solemn voice of the chaplain intoning the prayers, the thronged galleries and the fashionably dressed women occupying special seats on the floor—all these had the fascination of a movie show to a logger from the backwoods. John may have questioned the wisdom of spending so much money and labour for no apparent tangible results, but it was the custom and he acquiesced. It provided the people with a show, and they were willing to pay for it.

The records do not show that John had much to say in that first session. The blunt, unpolished farmer must have felt rather out of place in these new surroundings. It was so different from a rural council hall where the members could loll in *négligé* and smoke their pipes as they discussed municipal affairs. Here they were presided over by a Speaker seated on a chair like a throne and wearing a black, three-cornered hat that seemed to have floated in from the time of the four Georges. That Speaker with all his state and courtesy proved a thorn in John's political flesh.

New as he was, his natural energy had to find some outlet. He asked some questions and proposed some motions and amendments to Bills. Almost invariably when he rose another member would spring to his feet with :

"Mr. Speaker. The member for Delta is entirely out of order. The motion he proposes is beyond the right of a private member to introduce and——"

John would rise in vigorous protest. He might not be as well acquainted with the rules of the House as some "honourable members," but he guessed he had ordinary common sense and knew what he was talking about, which was more than some folks could say and——

John's sallies, couched in language more forcible than grammatical, and containing an odd misplaced "h," would be greeted with laughter, and when the Speaker ruled against him it completed his mortification.

The Speaker fortified his decisions with quotations from May, Todd, Bourinot, and others, and John remembered those names. Time after time he was knocked down with them, and when the session closed he resolved to take these guns of the enemy and convert them into weapons for his own defence.

Chief among those who had helped to bowl John over was A. E. McPhillips, who was later to become Attorney-General, and is now a Justice of the Court of Appeal of British Columbia. He had a fine resounding eloquence, was always gentlemanly in debate, but a stickler for correct procedure. Afterwards John and he became quite friendly, but just at the time John did not feel so kindly disposed toward him.

"Confound that McPhillips," he remarked to a friend. "I'll get even with him yet."

Oscar Bass, now Deputy Attorney-General of the province, was at that time law clerk of the Legislature. He recognized John's potential ability, and assisted him in the selection of books that would help him.

John was conscious that in his first session he had shone chiefly as a source of amusement to his fellow-members, and was resolved that it should not continue. In fact, all he had got upon the order paper was a notice of a small amendment to the Municipal Act, a question or two about the actions of fruit inspectors, and a query as to why the Government was not doing more to arrest the spread of "brown rot in plums."

A newspaper man asked John, after he became Premier, what had been his impressions of his first session in Parliament.

"I used to look round and wonder why men of any ability had ever sent me there," was his reply.

"And what do you think about it now?"

"Waal," said John with a slow smile, "I sometimes wonder why they sent the other fellows."

The next session was a special sitting and followed so closely that it was almost a continuation of the first. Again John said

little, as he was not yet prepared ; but at home he was digesting Bourinot, May, and Todd. It was said that he made speeches to the horses, and spent some time in debating as to whether a cow that kicked the milk pail was within the rules of the stable or not. If ruled out of order he required the assistance of no Sergeant-at-Arms to inflict condign punishment.

The result was that to his third session, which opened early in 1902, he returned with his retentive memory bristling with points of order, like a sheaf of arrows, ready to pierce the hide of the first opponent.

SCENE 23. THE FIGHT IN THE HOUSE

IN his third session, the members, who in other years had obstructed John's motions with points of order, were surprised to find that not only was it difficult to find any such opening against him now, but that on the other hand he would check and trip them on procedure at every possible opportunity. Further than that he fortified his objections with quotations from authorities which even the learned lawyers in the House could not refute.

While some members were inclined to poke fun at his rural crudities, he had finished his second session with an enhanced reputation, though he had spoken but little. His human qualities appealed and even his opponents addressed him simply as John.

"Let the bull pass, John," said a fellow-member when he was objecting to a Bill in one of the House committees. It was intended as a sly reference to John's rural training and thick pronunciation of certain words, combined with a picture in outline of the Delta farmer trying to head off a refractory animal in one of his fields.

"Yes, and mind it don't bowl you over before it gets out of the gate," he would retort.

So far John had rather distinguished himself by questions, motions, and suggestions than by the long speeches in which he afterwards indulged. He still stayed with Martin in his fragment of the Opposition, but was not by any means in agreement with his leader. There was disintegration in the Opposition of itself.

Those claiming to be the majority of opponents of the Government had ranged themselves in another faction under young Dick McBride, of New Westminster. McBride was the very anti-type of Martin. Tall and imposing of stature, his head was crowned with a mass of wavy hair already turning grey at the age of thirty. He could have adorned the Court of Louis the Fourteenth without any necessity for the purchase of a wig. He was the embodiment of courtesy and good humour, and his wit and fluency, derived from an Irish ancestry, made him generally popular. Already he was well on his way to the leadership in which he afterwards gained such distinction.

Both were ambitious to lead, and it was hardly likely that McBride could work in harmony with Fighting Joe. After the defeat of his Government in 1900, Martin, though chieftain of a diminutive band, had occupied the seat of the Leader of the Opposition in the House. McBride and his followers held that since Martin represented only a minority of the Opposition and had practically declared himself a supporter of the Government he was not entitled to it. Trouble followed. Following the opening of the session of 1902 the Sergeant-at-Arms and his staff undertook to rearrange the seats, on whose instructions no one seemed to know. Martin entering the House before prayers saw a desk with the name of McBride on it where his used to stand, while his own had been pushed farther down the row. He grew irate and protested with his usual vigour, but just then the House was called to order and the chaplain came in to read prayers. Martin went grimly to the place assigned him, but did not stay there.

The members stood with heads bowed in prayer and political cogitation, a dignified canon of the Church of England was imploring that "peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety may be established among us for all generations," and even as he did so Fighting Joe was observed to be edging along behind his pious colleagues to come to a standstill beside McBride's chair. That young man with his crown of glory bowed over his desk did not observe him, but no sooner had the last "Amen" been said than Martin snatched away McBride's chair and seated himself in it.

Hardly had he done so than Smith Curtis (member for Rossland

and a former law partner of Martin in Manitoba, but now politically estranged) sprang forward and grabbed his former colleague by the neck in an endeavour to pull him out of the chair. Two of Martin's friends sprang to his assistance and tried to pull Curtis off, but he in turn was reinforced by two of McBride's friends, and a lively tug of war followed, with Martin and his chair as the rope. Fighting Joe was in his element. He grasped the arms of the chair and planted his feet firmly on the floor.

Some preliminary cries of "Shame" from the galleries were soon drowned in howls of delight as the spectators rose on tiptoe and bent over the railings to get a better view. Human nature loved its fight, and it was not often that the dignified Chamber was transformed into a Roman arena. There were cheers when it was found that the combat had left the pugnacious Joe firmly entrenched.

It was the first day of Mr. C. E. Pooley's second Speakership, and it was a trying beginning. He called sharply for order and threatened to clear the galleries if the disturbance continued. In the meantime Martin still sat in the leader's chair with McBride seated on the desk in front of him facing the Speaker.

McBride deplored the scene, but said that he was entitled to the seat. Mr. Martin had at the last session declared himself a supporter of the Dunsmuir Government and should be on the other side of the House.

John had taken no part in the fight, but he did have a hand in the debate that followed. He regretted the "unseemly squabble," but complained that in the rearrangement of seats they had relegated himself and some others to the far end of the Chamber. Smith Curtis had tried to use physical force and his action was unworthy of any decent man. (Cries of "Order.") All right, if members deserted their party and their principles they had no right to cross the House and oust other members from their seats.

Smith Curtis demanded that John should withdraw his remarks, and the Speaker ordered him to do so. John battled a little further and then made a reluctant retreat and sat down.

It was at about this point that "Billy" McInnes arose. In ready extemporaneous eloquence he was the peer of anyone in the House. He was still under thirty, and there was an air of cheru-

bic boyishness in his face, while his very spectacles seemed to radiate his abounding vitality.

He was spoken of sometimes as the young Demosthenes of B.C., or the boy orator of Canada. He rose to the occasion with a smile :

“ Mr. Speaker. I have witnessed with mingled amusement and admiration the affecting spectacle of the member for Rossland with his arms entwined around the neck of the senior member for Vancouver (Martin), and have also seen the member for Dewdney (McBride) seated lovingly on the member for Vancouver's knee, but wondered whether under the circumstances the member for Vancouver did not feel inclined to take him over his knee and treat him in the good old-fashioned way.”

The laughter that greeted this sally soothed the ruffled feelings of the members to some extent, but discussion as to the rights of seating still continued. It was settled for the time being by a resolution of the diplomatic McInnes to the effect that members should continue to hold the seats occupied by them at the last session until they could come to some agreement among themselves. Thus Fighting Joe was left in possession of the seat of the Leader of the Opposition, from which vantage-point he treated the House to the peculiar spectacle of continued support of the Government, which he was nominally seated there to oppose.

John could not follow his old leader in this erratic course, and with other Liberals allied himself with McBride in effective opposition to the Government in power.

SCENE 24. OLIVER'S LAND PROBE

It was in the session of 1902 that John began his famous probe into the Columbia and Western land grant. It was in connection with a subsidy of some two million acres that had been granted by a former Government to a subsidiary of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for the construction of a line through the southern interior of the province. The railway company was not satisfied with the quality of some of the land, and the Government

of the day had agreed to an exchange of two of the blocks for two others (outside the area to be served by the railway) which were considered also to have valuable possibilities for oil.

John Oliver held that this was an illegal transaction, and he moved for the appointment of a Select Committee of the Legislature to investigate. As mover for the investigation he was practically in charge, and it was referred to by the Press as "Oliver's Committee." He had able legal assistance in Lyman P. Duff, then practising in Victoria, and now Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. Mr. Duff afterwards complimented John on the vigour and ability he had displayed.

The Committee sat for the greater part of the session of 1903, and among the witnesses called was Thomas Shaughnessy, president of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. There was much dry insignificant detail to be dealt with, but I can imagine that John, who possessed an innate legal mind, enjoyed it all. It afforded scope for his energy in digging up details and for the exercise of his remarkable powers of memory and analysis, and when the Committee finally found that the Company had no right whatever to the land, it enhanced his prestige and won him more respectful hearings.

A later opponent, W. J. Bowser, once remarked : " Had John Oliver had the education and training, he would have made a remarkable lawyer, but then I suppose some corporation would have grabbed him and his services would have been lost to the country."

John was satisfied—625,000 acres of land had been saved to the province for all time, and he felt that he had done well by his country.

SCENE 25. "O-LA-LA JOHN"

THOSE were days of short-lived Governments in British Columbia. The millionaire Dunsmuir's Premiership had lasted a little over two years, but all his gold could not gild his Government's weakness as it tottered to political oblivion. Dunsmuir was succeeded by the militaristic Colonel Prior, a fine figure in a braided uniform,

but doomed on this occasion to command a disastrous retreat. He was only installed late in 1902, and his first session in the following year proved his last.

The session of 1903 was notable. It witnessed the Columbia and Western land grant investigation already referred to, and it began with the obstruction of John Oliver on the opening day. The House opened on a Thursday, and Premier Prior, following a custom long established, moved its adjournment till Monday.

John rose in vigorous protest. Here they were meeting in April, when they should have met two months earlier. Why waste all this time? Charges had been made against the Government which, if true, showed they were unfit to act as advisers to his Honour.

Loud cries of “ Order, order,” from the Government supporters interrupted him.

Mr. Speaker Pooley was a courtly gentleman of the old English school. He politely reminded John that the charges to which he referred had nothing to do with the business before the House and he must rule him out of order.

John persisted for a while and sat down reluctantly, but in a minute was up again demanding the right to speak on a question of privilege and accusing the Government of giving false answers to questions asked at the last session.

Again there were shouts of “ Order, order,” and again the Speaker ruled that John was out of order. After a little further persistence he retired to his seat growling like a baited bear in his own peculiar pronunciation :

“ Things have come to a pretty pass in this prvince if representatives of the people are sent to the House only to be muzzled by the Speaker.”

The Speaker observed that he regretted to hear such remarks, and the business of the House proceeded.

John's bearish mood toward the Government continued as the session advanced, and he lost no chance of sticking his claws into its skin. Irritated by his attacks, members of the Government itched for an opportunity to strike back, and soon it came.

John had a friend who was an officer of the Olalla Mining Company, which claimed to be capitalized for eight million

dollars and in possession of rich holdings in South Kootenay. This friend got John's ear and told him of all they would do to bring in capital and develop the country, and asked for his good offices in securing assistance from the Legislature.

It was one of those times when the world looked good to John and he was less cautious than usual.

"Sure. I'll do what I can for you."

So when the matter came before the House committee John said he was representing the interests of the company and from what he knew he thought it advisable to meet their requests. Afterwards it proved that the company, like many others at the time, was building on its hopes rather than its possessions, and of this John was to be forcibly reminded.

At the opening of one of the sittings, John slammed the Government right and left as an aggregation utterly unworthy of public confidence.

Eberts, the Attorney-General, was quick to reply. He was a man of great personal charm with an eloquence enriched by a voice like a silver bell ; but when his tongue was charged with anger it became an automatic pistol snapping against his teeth and rattling out fusillades against his opponents.

"It ill becomes the member for Delta to asperse the members of His Majesty's Government," he declared, "when only last year he did more that was adverse to the interests of the country than any other member of this House. He was the agent of a company engaged in fleecing servant girls in New York of their hard-earned wages——"

"That is absolutely false," roared John, bringing his big fist down on the desk with a thump that rattled the inkstand.

Eberts continued, and read letters to show that the company was capitalized at \$8,000,000, had not spent more than \$10,000 all told, and had only three men working on its property.

"And this," he said, shaking a minatory finger at John, "this is the agent for the Olalla Company. Are you not their agent?" he demanded sternly.

"No," retorted John hotly, "and never was, and I defy the Attorney-General or any other member of the Government to prove that I had any connection with this or any other company,

or that I have done anything discreditable since becoming a member of this House.”

Eberts continued that one reason given by the member for Delta for leaving the support of the Government was that it would not build a road for the Olalla Company “ which I represent.”

John then explained. “ As an old friend of one of the officers of the company I laid their proposition before the Government, but did not profit by it a single cent, nor do I ever expect to.”

People who knew John did not question his explanation, but for a long time afterwards whenever he made a *faux pas* he was apt to be taunted with :

“ O la, la, John ! ”

I can hardly imagine he enjoyed this reminder of his error, but he accepted it with the best grace possible under the circumstances, and henceforth was more cautious in his promises.

It proved a bitter and contentious session from start to finish. Attorney-General Eberts referring to charges made by Smith Curtis against the Government declared that “ there was no way of stopping a lying, slanderous tongue.”

At a later stage, Curtis demanded an investigation that brought about the downfall of the Government. Colonel Prior had been connected with the wholesale hardware firm of E. G. Prior & Co., in Victoria, but before he entered politics it had been formed into a limited liability concern controlled by the shareholders. At a time when the Colonel had added to his duties of Premier that of Acting Commissioner of Public Works, tenders were called for hardware needed in the construction of the Chimney Creek Bridge in the interior of the province. Looking over the list of tenderers he asked why the firm of E. G. Prior & Co. had not been included. At his suggestion they were notified, and tendered for a supply of wire cable at a lower price than the others. They were given the contract.

Smith Curtis, supported by John and others, moved a resolution asking for a committee to inquire into the propriety of the Premier's conduct, in notifying his own firm.

The committee met, and Colonel Prior frankly admitted his part in the transaction. He had thought he was acting in the

best interests of the province, and if he was in error he was prepared to take the consequences.

His Government had already been weakened by two or three resignations, and this proved the last straw. In spite of the gallant Colonel's frankness and evident sincerity, he and his Government were dismissed from office by the Lieutenant-Governor. While there are blunders, sometimes more serious in their consequences than crimes, it left no blemish on Colonel Prior's character, and some years later he died Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia.

Richard McBride, as leader of the main Opposition, was called upon to succeed him in the Premiership. He was only a little over thirty at the time, and in spite of a tendency to diffuse exuberance in speech had already given evidence of adroit and tactful leadership.

He decided to establish his Government on party lines. It was not an easy decision, since within the past year or two he had owed much of his ascendancy to the support of Liberals like John Oliver, T. W. Paterson, Charles Munro, and several others who had swung in behind him ; but McBride felt that the party system offered the best guarantee of security in office.

He took his courage in his hands, called together his supporters in the Legislature, and told them in his suavest manner that, having decided to form a Conservative Government, he regretted that some of his old friends could not be included, but hoped that it would make no difference in their personal relations. But it did. Some of the Liberals felt that they were being deprived of the fruits of a victory that they had helped to bring about, and Charles Munro, one of the quietest of them, remarked as he left the room :

"There is one difference between you and Judas, Dick. Judas had the decency to go out and hang himself."

I fancy this must have hurt McBride, who was a man of genuinely sympathetic nature, but he went through with his plans.

I am sure that Munro's caustic remark was not made because of any disappointment on his own behalf, as he was the last man to desire a position in the Government, but he felt hurt that his friends, John Oliver and T. W. Paterson, who had been indicated for office, should be excluded.

John was ambitious, and no doubt felt some disappointment, but he appears to have said little at the time, and eventually, I think, was not displeased that events had taken this turn. At heart he was a party man, and the emptiness of labels in a Confederacy where Quebec, its most Conservative province, was sending solid delegations of Liberals to Parliament, and Nova Scotia, in a Liberal regime lasting nearly a quarter of a century, persisted in maintaining an antiquated Legislative Council or upper chamber (later abolished by the Conservatives) never occurred to him.

He remembered the class antagonism of the land of his boyhood, he had been nurtured on the *Toronto Globe*, and despite his natural individualistic and Conservative tendency the Liberal was the only party for him. Above all it afforded a fine outlet for his combative propensities, and he would probably enjoy fighting the Government more than supporting it. Henceforth he would be a Saul with a flaming sword felling the enemy right and left, and that, even though his calumnious opponents should declare that he rather resembled Samson massacring the Philistines with a fragment of asinine anatomy.

SCENE 26. EXIT MR. MARTIN

THE election campaign that followed the formation of the McBride Government was a welter of heat and confusion. John had become estranged from Joe Martin over the Columbia and Western land grant affair, and had not neglected to denounce his old leader. Martin had resigned the leadership of the Liberal Party in the province, but was nominated to lead their campaign in Vancouver, and John was their champion in Delta. They went into the fight without an acknowledged leader, and tied together only by a party name.

The campaign was embittered by a misunderstanding that had occurred between John and McBride. The latter asserted that when called upon to form a Government he had hinted to John that he might organize another Coalition Cabinet, and if so would be glad to have him in ; and to this John had assented, but because

a party Government was formed instead, and John was shut out, he was wreaking his personal feelings on the new Premier.

This John hotly denied, and in the exuberance of his wrath the newspapers declared that he had likened McBride to a dead rat. John afterwards denied that he had made such a statement, and McBride publicly accepted his denial, but there was bitterness nevertheless.

By the irony of the years John's opponent was the same "Bill Ladner" whose cow he had plunged his head in the mud to rescue long before he had grown the whiskers that would have conveyed a good portion of that mud to his own farm. "Old Bill," as he was called, was popular; but he had probably passed the apex of his energy and does not appear to have waged a very vigorous campaign. There was evidently no personal ill-will between him and John, who contented himself with vituperation against McBride and his Government, and left his opponent pretty well alone.

Joe Martin and John Oliver, with no love for each other at the time, were the Liberal storm centres of that campaign. W. J. Bowser, already recognized as a force on the Conservative side, was called to Delta to help to combat John, and he wittily described the situation.

"Here you have a party without head or tail. In Vancouver we have Joe Martin leading Joe Martin, and here John leads John."

That John's prestige had grown since his first election was shown by the attention his opponents gave him. Taking advantage of his blunt, bucolic manner, they tried to down him with ridicule, and the Olalla incident was frequently invoked to tickle the risibility of the electors.

The Columbian newspaper of New Westminster devoted to him a long editorial headed:

"OLIVER. OLALLA AND OMNIPOTENCE"

One passage from it read:

"In his own estimation Mr. Oliver has grown to be a very great man indeed. As he modestly puts it himself he was the



DELTA HOUSE



DELTA FARM

brains as well as the mouthpiece of the McBride Opposition in the Legislature. His predecessor of course was Providence, but even Omnipotence had to move to the rear when Mr. Oliver turned from following Premier Dunsmuir upon that gentleman declining to worship at the shrine of Olalla, goddess of the scullery maids of New York, glorified by the epistles of John Oliver, her high-priest in the Legislature."

Premier McBride came also to Delta and devoted a large part of his speech to John, whom he declared had proved himself no longer worthy of the title of "Honest John," since his course in the past session and his connection with the Olalla matter had shown him to be no longer worthy of public confidence, nor would he reply to the ungentlemanly epithets which Mr. Oliver had used about him.

The latter was a good diplomatic stroke characteristic of Dick McBride, but John most resented his insinuation about Olalla.

"Who are these people who are circulating these stories about me and Olalla?" he shouted at one of his meetings. "There is nothing I have to be ashamed of. Why, when the report of the discussion in the House came out in the *Victoria Times* with all the details, didn't I buy a thousand copies at my own expense (and they cost me thirty-five dollars) and distribute them among my constituents? I would like some of these people who are circulating these stories to come up on the platform and have it out with me. But no, like their master, they deal in cowardly and untruthful statements."

It must have been some consolation to John that the people of his district who knew him best refused to credit any imputation of underhand dealing on his part, and, in spite of the campaign of ridicule and recrimination, when the polls closed in October he was re-elected by an increased majority.

On the other hand, in Vancouver on election night, Bowser climbed on a carriage in the street, and in thanking the voters for his own election remarked:

"In this election we have done one good service to the province at least. We have got rid of Joe Martin in our political life, and I think we have got rid of him for good."

Those words proved prophetic. Fighting Joe never again

occupied a seat in the Legislative Assembly. He would have liked to, but no party seemed anxious to have him back. In the politics of the Dominion he was estranged from the party leaders and was quite open in his denunciation of Laurier, Sifton, *et al.* Failing to find recognition in his own country he turned his attention to the wider sphere of British politics.

The citizens of Vancouver awoke one day to read in their papers that the Liberals of Stratford-on-Avon in England had chosen as their candidate in the forthcoming by-election an ex-Premier of British Columbia, a man renowned for his fighting qualities. There was something so incongruous in the association of Shakespeare and Joe Martin that hilarity was mingled with amazement and some people were inclined to exclaim :

“ O Joe, for Heaven’s sake forbear
To tread the dust enclosed there ! ”

But Joe went on treading. He had not an ounce of poetry in his make-up and was never known to quote a line of Shakespeare or any other bard. Had he done so I imagine his favourite text would have been, “ A plague on both your houses.”

The cartoonists took advantage of the occasion. One of them represented Martin standing with a tall hat on his head and a travelling bag in his hand looking over the woods and streams of Stratford and soliloquizing :

“ What a quaint old place ! It reminds me of Chilliwack.”

One can imagine that Joe with his raucous, high-pitched nasal voice must have sounded like a discordant croak in a land of bowery hollows and sacred memories. It was a place Conservative by tradition and he was not elected. It gave him, however, the publicity he craved, and in the following General Election he was nominated for and elected in a London constituency, in which no doubt he felt more at home than among the rustic surroundings of Stratford.

Again his inability to work in harmony with others proved his downfall. He who had been a shining light in a provincial Legislature of forty members found himself a feeble rush in an Imperial House of over six hundred. He tried to thrust himself forward and catch the Speaker’s eye, but his style of speaking was

not suited to the cultured tones of the British House, and he received little attention. He did not like to be overshadowed and was soon out of the Liberal caucus and denouncing his leaders, Asquith and Lloyd George, who quietly ignored him in return.

Finally he returned to Vancouver, a disappointed man. Henceforth he was doomed to wander, a political Ishmaelite, seeking a resting-place for his feet and finding none. It was said that he would rather be damned in the newspapers than not mentioned at all, and he continued to seek publicity.

As an Independent he contested Vancouver in a Dominion election, only to lose his deposit. He ran for Mayor of Vancouver, to be decisively rejected. In his later years he would run as an Independent in almost every General Election, only to be hopelessly defeated each time.

His methods of courting publicity were sometimes extraordinary. I was reporting in the police court one day when he was engaged as counsel in a case. The action was decided by the Magistrate against him, but Joe continued to stand on his feet in voluble protest after the next case had been called. The Magistrate asked him to sit down or leave the court. Joe grabbed a high-crowned, old-fashioned hard felt hat in one hand and a blue bag in the other. As a K.C. he was entitled to carry a red bag, and if, on this occasion, he had reverted to the habits of the common lawyer, the bag looked red enough to him by the time he got through. He still continued to talk and refused to move farther in spite of the Magistrate's command to sit down or leave the room.

The Magistrate beckoned to the Chief of Police, and as he advanced Joe's face flushed to the colour that his bag should have been and he shouted :

"Mr. Magistrate, I will call the attention of the Attorney-General to this outrageous conduct."

He then turned, blue bag in one hand and hat in the other, as if to leave the room, but he had hardly gone five paces when a defiant impulse seized him. He spun round and with dark eyes flashing and nose red as an eagle's beak fresh from the carnage, placed his back against the wall. His corpulent bulk sagged downward like a sack of potatoes, and there was a visible partition of his body beneath it as his legs spread apart, and he planted his

feet firmly on the brown, string carpet on the court-room floor. In this position he trumpeted his defiance.

“Put me out ! Put me out !” he yelled.

The request was promptly complied with. The Chief of Police seized one arm, and a big constable the other, and between them they dragged Joe through the door, still holding his blue bag and hat, and bouncing and kicking like a stout and lively marionette. As they struggled through the comparatively narrow passageway of the door, Joe’s knuckles were rasped on the lintel. “You son-of-a-gun,” he said, glaring at the Chief. “I’ll fix you for this.”

But his threat did not stay his progress. He was hustled down the stairs, and thrust forth into outer daylight to lick his knuckles and cool his temples in the balmy morning air.

I have reason to remember this, as the following day he wrote to Carter-Cotton, complaining that I had written “a grossly exaggerated report” of his ejection. For my part I thought I had let him down lightly, but so do human opinions differ. Mr. Cotton told me to take no notice of this or any other of Martin’s complaints.

In the last years of his life Joseph Martin was a pathetic figure. His health failed, his flesh shrunk so that his clothes hung loosely about him. Except for an occasional flash his old fighting vigour was dimmed and his speeches had lost their appeal. He coquetted again with the Liberal Party, but they would have none of him. He wandered from convention to convention seeking nominations and finding none. Of wealth, honours, hosts of friends—all that should go toward a happy old age—he had not one. It was the tragedy of a character for ever out of tune with its surroundings—of a soul too fond of the lamplight that scorched its wings, too heedless of the stars and glories above its head.

When he died, John, who, in spite of their many differences, admired his fine scorn of consequence, took the charitable view :

“Whatever may be said of him I think that his life on the whole was an influence for good.”

SCENE 27. JOHN'S MANNERISMS

FOLLOWING the election of 1903 the Liberal Party cleared its decks for action. The first task was to elect a leader. Passing the brilliant McInnes, their choice fell on J. A. Macdonald, an able and respected lawyer who represented the mining town of Rossland. John at that time did not think of the leadership. He was too conscious of his own educational limitations to aspire so high. He did, however, prove an excellent lieutenant.

The Conservatives had won a precarious victory. After a Speaker was elected their total membership promised only a majority of one against a possible combination of seventeen Liberals and three Socialists.

McBride proved equal to the occasion. He was a born conciliator. He knew how to soothe the Socialists, and in a crisis their leader, Hawthornthwaite, always rallied to his support. McBride had a natural fluency of speech, but I could never consider him a first-class speaker. He said little that stuck in the memory. His voice was too nasal to be musical, and his speeches were marked by a diffuseness which, if taken down word for word, would have made boresome reading. But in action, while not illuminating, he was interesting. He had a fine, if rather round-shouldered, figure, and a massive head crowned with a halo of natural curly grey hair, which imparted an air of distinction that he did not fail to capitalize.

One brilliant member of his party in a moment of disaffection once described him as "talk with hair on." This, however, was unjust, as McBride had many admirable qualities, supreme among which was his adroit leadership of men. He had the art of saying "No" as if he were conferring a favour. I remember that on one occasion Parker Williams, a Socialist member, said :

"A few weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, I came down and saw the Premier about some things needed in my district. I came away thinking that I had got everything I had come for, but by the time I got to the top of the hill half-way home I wondered whether I had really got anything, and by the time I got home, Mr. Speaker, I came to the conclusion that I had been buncoed."

At which McBride laughed as heartily as anyone.

It was in the session of 1905 that I first came into personal contact with John. I had been sent by the Hon. F. L. Carter-Cotton, President of the Council in the McBride Government, to report proceedings for his paper, the *Vancouver News-Advertiser*. Mr. Cotton was a journalist of the old English school, and directed me to report everything fully and without party discrimination. I was well pleased to take his course, and found friends on both sides, John Oliver among them.

He was then in his forty-ninth year, and his beard and hair were greying rapidly. He was a stout and well-built figure, and he spoke with shoulders back and chest out-thrust, occasionally bringing a big fist down on the desk or smiting it with a resounding whack into the open palm of his left hand. I noticed that he had peculiar mannerisms of pronunciation. He referred to the Premier as the "Primier," with an emphasis on the "mere," and to the Attorney-General as the "Attawney-General," with the accent on the "aw." He spoke of "the hanourable member" and of the province as "the pravince," and he referred to Hawthornthwaite as "the member for Nanymer" (Nanaimo).

He corrected this in later years, and I have wondered sometimes whether there was not a little sly, intentional humour in his indulgence in an enunciation which his quick intelligence must have told him was in conflict with that of those around him. His lapses in grammar were frequent, his worst offences being the constant use of "was" for "were," and "is" for "are," but this was probably the result of the ingrained habits of youth. At other times he misplaced his "h's" with humorous effect.

He usually kept in his desk a bag of peppermints, which he would munch while he chuckled over some witty stroke he had directed at his opponents, or which his opponents may have directed at him. He could laugh at both sides and himself.

I remember checking up impressions of members with William Blakemore, a well-known journalist who was with me in the gallery at the time.

"He has a well-shaped head," was Blakemore's comment, and the massive brow mounting under the grey hair justified his appraisal.

At times his speech was lumbering and prosy with the details which were among his weaknesses, but on other occasions he electrified the house with his vigorous outbursts of protest or condemnation. At such times he laid about him right and left, and was equally at war with Socialists and Conservatives. He and Hawthornthwaite, the Socialist leader, seemed to derive mutual enjoyment from baiting each other. He once described the latter as :

“The working man's representative who never works—except with his jaw.”

In reality Hawthornthwaite's brain worked as quickly as his jaw. He was widely read and had a nimble wit. On one occasion he undertook to treat the House to a long dissertation on the social progress of mankind. He went back past the dinosaur and pterodactyl to the single-cell protoplasm. He drew copious draughts from the wells of science ; he traced the course of history through Chaldea, Egypt, and Rome to the shores of Old England. When he had finished John Oliver rose with a weary air.

“I must protest, Mr. Speaker, against the member for Nanymer wasting the time of this House wandering all over Creation. Let us get down to business.”

This was characteristic of him. He hated abstraction and speculation, but loved to get at grips with dykes and roads and clearings in the woods. If the Government had reason on many occasions to consider him an obstructionist in the House, in the committees his ability and practical experience proved of a service to the province for which, as happens in such cases, he received too little thanks.

In debate he was an adept in the use of violent-sounding language, but all “within the law.”

“If the Hanourable the Primier makes that statement about me he is a falsifier,” he would say with a thump on his desk. He knew too much to use the unparliamentary word “liar.”

McBride would rise with a remonstrative smile that shed unction on the stormy waters of debate.

“Surely, my honourable friend is not serious. He does not

mean that.” And in a few minutes he would have John pacified—for the time.

McBride had developed from the frothiness of his youth to the dignified ruler who reproved his opponents more in sorrow than in anger. The consequence was that John’s bludgeoning glanced off and left his shining armour unscathed.

McBride was greatly assisted in those years by his Minister of Finance, the Honourable R. G. Tatlow, who guarded the treasury with scrupulous care and knew when to take advantage of the vagaries of finance. The financial position of the province had been anything but good when he came in, but under his wise guidance it steadily improved and McBride’s Government was given credit for it.

Tatlow was the very antithesis of John, and yet personally they were the best of friends. The Finance Minister was tall, loose-jointed, of easy attire, but of aristocratic tastes, and at all times a good type of the British gentleman. He was fond of horseback riding and hunting, and one day in the House, after John had been attacking his policies, he rose and said he was sure the member for Delta meant no unkindness to himself, as he should never forget a shooting trip he had made in the Delta district, and how he had been invited into a certain home and given an excellent dinner.

It was only a year or two later that he was thrown from his dog-cart and died as the result of a fractured skull. He was given the biggest funeral I ever saw in Vancouver, and John Oliver came from Delta to attend it.

I saw him at the church and remarked: “You have come a long way to attend here, John.”

“Ah,” he replied, “I would have done a good deal more for Tatlow.”

It was a refreshing touch of the human side in politics and stood out in relief from John’s continuous record of battle with his foes. But that battle went steadily on.

Between sessions John returned to his cattle and pigs and enjoyed his good wife’s home-made bread and butter ; and like Acteon, he would return to the fight, his strength renewed by contact with his mother earth.

W. J. Bowser, who was long to be his political foe, had been returned to the House for the first time in 1903, and, though still outside the Government, had rapidly become recognized as McBride's first lieutenant in debate. He was at that time quite youthful and handsome, with a Buonapartite face which, combined with his fighting ability, won him the nickname of "Napolcon" Bowser. He had a brain that worked at lightning speed, and between it and his tongue there was no impediment. When warmed up he fulminated in a very cataract of words. He had a happy combination of imagination, humour, and practical ability vigorously expressed that would fill the galleries when he was announced to speak. Like John, he was audacious and did not hesitate to lay on the colour in order to bring home his point.

He loved to poke fun at John's rusticity.

"The member for Delta," he once declared, "goes around his district with an old white horse and a buckboard loaded with books and documents like a travelling salesman."

On another occasion, speaking of a Liberal convention in Vancouver, he said :

"I am told that when the member for Delta entered there was a loud tooting of horns and beating of drums, and the delegates all rose to their feet waving little flags and shouting : ' Oliver for me. Oliver for me.' "

"I congratulate the honourable gentleman on his imagination," replied John. "I was present on the occasion, it is true, but I can assure the House that not one of the things of which he has told you took place."

In reality Bowser had no little admiration for his rural opponent. Speaking of the Opposition, he told me once :

"Old John is the only real scrapper among them."

This may have seemed a one-sided statement, but it reflected his feeling for "old John."

John's attitude, like that of Randolph Churchill, seemed to be that it was the business of an Opposition to oppose, and he rather consistently carried it out. Nevertheless, in a quieter way he got in an occasional good constructive stroke by way of suggestion and amendments, and was a valuable worker on the House com-

mittees. So, in spite of badinage and ridicule, and the fact that the Conservative tide was rising with prosperous years, he went into his next campaign with a personal prestige considerably enhanced.

SCENE 28. IN DAILY ERUPTION

THE election of 1907 left the Liberal Party sadly depleted. Their number was cut down from seventeen to twelve. John was opposed by a young man, F. J. A. Mackenzie, destined at a later date to defeat him. On this occasion, however, he was returned with an increased majority. His leader, J. A. Macdonald, also came back, together with Stuart Henderson, of Yale, and Charles Munro. The brilliant McInnes had retired to become Governor of Yukon Territory. T. W. Paterson, another of their stalwarts, was beaten, but became Lieutenant-Governor a few years later. On the other hand, they were recruited by H. C. Brewster, of Alberni, who was afterwards to become the first Liberal Premier of British Columbia. The number of Conservatives was swelled to twenty-seven, so that if the Labour men combined with the Liberals against them they still had a formidable majority.

What the Opposition lacked in numbers they made up in energy, and John was the most truculent of them all. He became a living interrogation mark, and loaded the Order Paper with question after question. His objections on points of order were innumerable, and he was constantly on his feet with motions, amendments, and criticisms.

Norman Norcross, a journalistic friend of mine in Vancouver, thus parodied his actions :

“ John Oliver, my jo, John,
When first you won your seat,
The people did not hear you
So often on your feet.

“ But in the Legislature
Your voice is often heard,
The other members say, John,
‘ They can’t get in a word.’ ”

J. B. Fitzmaurice, of the Vancouver Province, whom I considered the cleverest cartoonist of his time in Canada, found in John an inexhaustible fountain of humour.

He made capital out of his loquacity. He pictured him as a living gramophone, his head on top of the stand and a horn in his mouth through which poured "Words ! Words ! Words !" On the side of the stand was inscribed,

"THE OLIVER

" Makes its own records,
Requires no winding."

By its side was standing a bewildered-looking citizen with his fingers in his ears exclaiming, " Won't it ever run down ? "

On a later occasion Fitzmaurice depicted him as a volcano at work. John's head and shoulders only were showing. He had a tattered old felt hat on his head, through the burst top of which was pouring a stream of lava, again entitled, " Words ! Words ! Words ! " and underneath was the inscription :

" MOUNT OLIVER IN DAILY ERUPTION AT VICTORIA."

I remember another artist depicting him in fighting attitude with head and shoulders back, fists clenched and one foot lifted to kick. I showed it to John's friend, Charlie Munro, who laughed heartily.

" It's just like him," he remarked. " He ought to have lived in the days of Cromwell."

In fact, some similarity between John and the grim Protector was apparent, though it is hardly likely that the Oliver of that day had the sense of humour so keen in his modern temperamental counterpart.

Charlie Munro, who represented Chilliwack in the Legislature, was a particular friend of mine, and he was also John's most intimate colleague in the House. On a week-end he had invited me to his room in the Dominion Hotel to have a chat. We were sitting there when John burst in.

" Come along," he said. " It's time to be getting out to that meeting in Saanich."

Munro shook his head. "I'm not going, John."

"Why not? We want you. So come along," demanded John.

"No," said Munro finally. "There will be plenty without me, and I don't feel inclined for a twelve-mile drive to-night."

"What's the good o' folks calling themselves Liberals," grumbled John, "if they act like that. I'm tired too, but I'm going, anyway."

And off he went in a huff. Munro looked at me and smiled.

"I guess the old man feels a bit sore," he remarked. "The fact is I have no heart for this sort of thing, but he's worth a dozen."

The incident made no difference in their friendly relations, which continued until Munro's too early death.

It was all part of John's battle with the Government, which continued both outside the House and in.

His attacks upon McBride were particularly vociferous. One of the latter's followers reminded him that he should not be so personal, as the Premier had shown that he was not wanting in the milk of human kindness.

"He may be full of the milk," retorted John, "but the cream is mighty slow to rise."

When John wandered into the realm of second-hand classical quotations he was not so fortunate. McBride had been protesting his innocence of some of John's numerous accusations and countercharging with considerable vehemence.

"The Honourable the Primier," said John in reply, "makes a great show of waving his arms and thumping his desk, but he is like the lady who protested too much and brought suspicion on herself."

Carter-Cotton, who had his suspicion of John's Shakespearian limitations, rose with an urbane smile.

"Would you mind telling us the name of the lady?" he asked gently.

But John was equal to the occasion. Leaning with one hand on his desk and raising the other, he pointed an accusing finger at his interrogator.

"No, sir. I don't know her name, but I dare say she exists in the minds of the gentlemen opposite."

John's tilts with Carter-Cotton were frequent, as they both represented rural constituencies lying side by side. Intellectually, Mr. Cotton was the equal, if not the superior, of any member of the House, but he suffered visibly from nerves when he got upon his feet, so that his clever utterances were weakened by want of force in delivery. As an editorial writer he was without a peer. As representative of a rural district he differed entirely from John, who was a farmer of the farmers, while Mr. Cotton was pre-eminently the city man, dignified and polite. John used to refer to him as "my brother farmer from Richmond," in which, I think, there was a touch of sarcasm.

John was complaining in the House about some information he had asked for from the Government, and which he contended they were afraid to give.

Mr. Cotton rose to reply for them. "I think we have made ourselves clear enough for any person of ordinary intelligence to understand. It is not the business of the Government to give intelligence to members opposite if they do not possess it."

"I quite agree with the honourable gentleman," said John, "because it is a well-known fact that the Government has none to spare."

While John enlivened the House by these tilts, he frequently wearied it by the length of his orations. At one session he was called upon to lead in criticism of the budget, and as he was confined to half an hour he acquitted himself admirably, and wound up with an eloquent peroration on the greatness of the country and all that the Liberals would do for it if in power that brought a storm of Opposition applause. They were so pleased that they assigned him the same task for another session, but unfortunately they gave him no time-limit.

He talked all one afternoon and part of the next in a speech loaded up with petty details about sales of timber limits and lands to speculators, of muddy roads and broken bridges in Liberal constituencies, and of the general ineptitude of the Government in all matters from mending a broken dyke to raising a million-dollar loan. The sitters in an attenuated House yawned, whis-

pered, and read newspapers, and were relieved when he had finished. A long report appeared in the *Victoria Times* running like a serial through two or three issues.

"It's not worth it," remarked John, quite conscious that his effort had fallen flat.

SCENE 29. THE OBSTRUCTIONIST

IF John was humorous he was also stubborn. It was very difficult to get him to retract or apologize even when it was clearly pointed out he was in error.

Once the Speaker demanded that he apologize for some reflections he had cast on the members opposite.

John argued against this at some length, but concluded : "Very well, Mr. Speaker, if it's a crime to tell the truth on this side of the House I apologize."

He was checked after another series of attacks, but this time he accepted reproof more graciously :

"All right, Mr. Speaker. I can see the gentlemen opposite are feeling rather bad, and as I don't want to hurt them any more I'll sit down."

But how he could obstruct !

I once read a newspaper story telling how, a few years previously, the Government had decided to finish the business and prorogue the House on a Saturday night. The evening session came, and John was up on his feet with objections to this and to that, talking at great length on each. The Government members implored him to desist, as the hour of midnight was approaching and prorogation might be delayed.

John told them the House was there to do the business of the country and not for the convenience of members who were in a hurry to get home.

They tried to stop him on the ground that he was out of order. John responded with long readings from May and Todd. Twelve o'clock came, the business was unfinished, and as it was against all British tradition to sit into Sunday morning, the House reluctantly adjourned till Monday.

One can imagine some black looks and hard words for John Oliver as the members sought their hats and coats in the cloak-room, but he chuckled to himself as he made his way to his hotel. He coolly gathered up his grips, paid his bill, and went down to the wharf, where he took the boat for Vancouver, which conveniently left at one in the morning. Some other members of the Opposition did the same, but the Government, fearing a snap division at the last moment, was unaware of this and the Whips held their followers over.

When the House met for prorogation on Monday they were amazed to find that John Oliver was not there. In fact, at that very moment he was, perhaps, feeding the hogs or the chickens on his farm and chuckling to himself as he thought of some thirty irate gentlemen in Victoria discordantly singing "God Save the King."

On other occasions he obstructed to more serious purpose.

Near the end of a session the Government asked for the adoption of a report recommending Kaien Island, on which Prince Rupert now stands, as the terminus of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. In a minority report, evidently framed by their leader, the Opposition had denounced the adoption of Kaien Island terminus as a scheme for the enrichment of "a band of adventurers, male and female."

In an all-night session they protested against the report, and John Oliver was chief obstructionist. He started talking at one in the morning and at half-past three was still going. The Speaker was naturally sleepy, and did little to check John, as he rambled through all the experiences of his life, real or imaginary. He told how as a boy in Derbyshire dales "I ran to my mammy for a piece of bread and treacle," how he had splashed in ditches, tumbled over windfalls, and had met with vicissitudes and humorous incidents in all phases of his career. When told he was out of order, he argued the point at length, and read long passages from May and Bourinot in order to kill time. His voice droned away above his desk like the murmur of many bees, and its soporific effect was not lost on his hearers. Many were sleeping in their chairs.

Big "Billy" Ross from Fernie rose once to point out to the

House that John's remarks were entirely out of order. John picked up a volume of May, which always lay ready on his desk, and turning to address Speaker Pooley, whom he had not looked at for about an hour, found that gentleman fast asleep in his chair.

"I would point out to this House," he said, "that the honourable member for Fernie is himself entirely out of order. The Speaker is asleep, and as he cannot preside in that condition, this House is not in session."

Ross saw the point, laughed and sat down, while John put a peppermint in his mouth and chuckled as he munched it.

The sudden change from the droning voices to silence awoke the Speaker, who opened his eyes to bawl out the first words that came to his mind :

"Are you ready for the question ? "

The House woke from its sleepiness with a roar of laughter, but it was not yet ready for the question. John continued to talk for a while longer, but his opposition was ineffective, as the report was finally adopted by a Government majority.

On another occasion his obstruction was more effective. The Government had introduced an election Bill, which, the Socialists claimed, would disfranchise hundreds of working men in the province. The Liberals joined hands with them, and the foremost obstructionists were his old foes the Socialists and John Oliver. In this case the saying that politics makes strange bed-fellows seemed likely to be literally fulfilled, for before the night was over they ordered mattresses and blankets to be placed in the lobbies so that they might sleep and relieve each other by turns. It was the progenitor of the modern "talkathon."

The Socialists and Liberals all took part, and John, though hampered by a cold, cawed away like a persistent crow. As the debate was in Committee of the whole House, more freedom was permitted than when the Speaker was in the chair, so John sat on the edge of his desk, dangled his legs, and hoarsely spluttered along. By three in the morning, when human vitality is at its lowest, everybody was decidedly sleepy. The members of the Government were not less weary than the others. The point was not half as important as the Opposition would make it appear, and McBride intimated that if they would consent to an adjourn-

ment, at the next sitting he would consider an amendment to meet their wishes. The House adjourned amid thumpings of Opposition applause. They had carried their point.

But Billy Ross did not forget John. A little later, in the course of a speech, he said he had come across some lines which would prove a fitting epitaph for the member for Delta when he had gone where they could hear him talk no more :

“ Here reader turn your weeping eyes,
My fate this dreadful moral teaches,
The hole in which my body lies
Would not contain one half my speeches.”

Probably John's wittiest antagonist in repartee was W. J. Bowser, who knew his weaknesses, and was fond of twitting him. John was not unmindful of public applause, and his eyes sometimes wandered around the galleries as he spoke.

“ Mr. Speaker,” said Bowser, “ I noticed that as the member for Delta spoke his eyes were constantly on the gallery, so I thought for a time you had moved your seat over there, but finding you sitting where you are, I can only conclude that his remarks were not addressed to this House at all, but to some fair goddess in the gallery.”

Bowser was once piloting a Bill through committee in the House. John objected to one of the clauses as conveying an entirely wrong meaning.

“ If you knew anything about law,” said Bowser sharply, “ you would understand it easily enough.”

“ The hanourable member may lambast me as a hayseed, and he may know a lot about law, but he has no monopoly of common sense,” retorted John.

After some further argument Bowser agreed to meet John's objection in part at least.

“ Now,” John chuckled, “ you'll have to admit that the farmer from Delta knows something about law after all.”

John once contended that the members of the Government were incapable of looking after themselves and seemed to imagine that Providence had a special mission to protect them.

“ Yes,” retorted Bowser quickly, “ and Old Nick looks after you.”

After the severe Liberal defeat in the 1907 election Bowser was twitting them on their disappointment. He said he could imagine their leader going to his room that night and saying with Cardinal Wolsey :

“ Farewell, a long farewell to all my greatness.”

And he went on to quote the whole of that famous passage.

“ Quote your authority,” said John, when he had finished. He probably meant his authority for the statement that Macdonald had spoken in this fashion, but Bowser neatly evaded him.

“ I hardly thought that was necessary,” he replied, “ but for the special enlightenment of the member for Delta I may inform him that I was quoting from Shakespeare’s great play Henry the Eighth.”

Part of the secret of John’s success was his supreme self-confidence.

“ I always mean what I say,” he asserted. “ I speak the same to-day as yesterday.” But on one occasion McBride tripped him on a mistaken statement.

John admitted his error, but said it was very seldom the Government was able to contradict him, and they well might glory a little on this occasion.

“ You are perfect, John,” said McBride, with his engaging smile.

“ I believe the Premier is sincere for once in his life,” replied John, to the amusement of the House.

He could be caustic on occasion. Replying to some remarks of the fluent Hawthornthwaite, he said :

“ The member for Nanymer talks a whole lot about things he knows nothing about. If he would only talk about the things he knows, we should very seldom hear him on the floor of this House.”

Yet on one occasion Hawthornthwaite came to his support.

A. E. McPhillips said the member for Delta claimed all the credit for the Columbia and Western land grant investigation in which he, among others, had a part.

“ Yes, and I did all the work,” said John.

“ Yes,” said Hawthornthwaite, “ the member for Delta did all the work, and the member for Islands [McPhillips] made all the

noise." Which was not exactly true, but near enough to serve its purpose of raising a laugh.

John was rather given to extremes in some of his statements. The Hon. F. L. Carter-Cotton was accused by John of securing his election by promising to have a bridge built over the North Arm of the Fraser, and it had never been done.

"Didn't you promise a bridge?" he asked bluntly.

"No."

"Then all I can say is that my honourable friend must have a great many liars in his constituency."

Carter-Cotton replied that he did not know about that, but it was true that some of the members opposite had spent a great deal of time there in the last campaign.

One of the particular objects of John's wrath was, what he considered the unfair allotment of money to be spent in Government constituencies as compared with that allowed for those represented by supporters of the Opposition. He was particularly bitter about the smallness of the allowance for Delta, and offered to resign in order that they might elect a Government supporter and get more.

"Surely my honourable friend is not serious," said McBride in gentle remonstrance.

"I can tell the honourable the Premier that I was never more serious in my life, and I defy him to come through my district and discuss the matter with me on the public platform. He says I am not serious. That's what he always says when he's driven into a corner. Why, if those words were struck out of the dictionary, I don't know what he would do."

"You got a million-dollar bridge," said McBride, referring to the Fraser Bridge at New Westminster.

"Yes," retorted John, "and you charge me a toll every time I go over it if only with a sucking-pig."

McBride reminded John that he had been in favour of the arrangement for tolls in order to get the bridge.

"Yes," replied John, "but that was for a time and not for eternity."

He continued to hold up the estimates item by item for criticism.

"How many estimates have we passed to-night?" asked Hawthornthwaite.

"Seventy-six," replied the chairman of the committee.

"Then that means that the member for Delta has spoken two hundred and twenty-eight times!" said Hawthornthwaite after rapid calculation.

On another occasion he twitted John with complaining about the pay of a janitor and swallowing an appropriation of \$600,000 for a corporation.

"I'd rather swallow that than the compliments of the member for Nanymer," said John.

For all this quibble, John was serious in his protest against the inequalities of appropriations real or supposed. Before the consideration of estimates was concluded he let himself go in a burst of eloquence.

"A few years ago we were cheering for the men who went to South Africa and laid down their lives, but I ask whether the British Empire is not likely to suffer more from crookedness and rottenness within than from enemies outside, and I want this House to say that we will not stand for such monstrous iniquities as are attempted in these appropriations."

Such language was naturally protested by the Government, and when he moved a motion of censure it was promptly voted down.

John, in his lighter moods, was, I often thought, prompted by his love of humour to affect a naïve ignorance, which was far from him, for the sake of the fun it invoked.

McBride had been accusing him of making certain charges against the Government "because he thinks he can make some little kudos out of it."

In the course of his reply John said: "The Honourable the Premier says I am trying to make some little 'kudoos,' whatever they may be." At which the House had a hearty laugh, which he enjoyed as much as anyone.

When John spoke he meant to be heard. This was apparent when Price Ellison, of Okanagan (later to become Minister of Finance and Agriculture) moved the second reading of a Bill to give live-stock breeders a lien on the young stock of a farm as

security for debt. As the subject seemed somewhat delicate for the mixed audience in the galleries, the mover spoke in a low voice.

"Will the honourable gentleman speak up so we can hear what he is saying?" demanded John. I imagine this was done more for the sake of embarrassing Price Ellison than anything else, but he had to speak louder.

A little later John rose in uproarious reply, denouncing the Bill as a gross interference with the individual liberties of the farmers, and concluding :

"Things have come to a pretty pass in this province when a man can't sell his own offspring."

At this apparent assertion of the rights of farmers to chattel slavery in their children the members roared with laughter. John smiled also and sat down, observing : "You know what I mean all right."

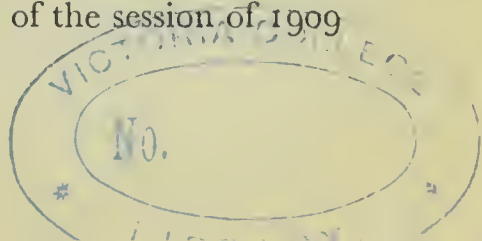
In spite of his protests the Bill, which appeared to be a reasonable measure, was passed.

For all John's wit and breaks he did much useful work. He moved a resolution in favour of the Government supplying free textbooks for the children in the public schools. It was not accepted at the time, but was destined to bring some fruit in later years. In the committees he continued to be an industrious member and a wise and practical counsellor.

SCENE 30. TILTS WITH BOWSER

IN what was to be his last term in the House for some years John's particular target was W. J. Bowser, who had been elevated to the Attorney-Generalship.

On the eve of the last election Bowser had stated at a public meeting that he had been informed that there was an understanding between the Liberals and the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company that the latter should be allowed to import 50,000 Japanese to work on the construction of the railway from Prince Rupert. It was one of those statements sometimes made in the heat of party enthusiasm in a campaign, but John took it very seriously. In a speech at the opening of the session of 1909



he warmed up, and leaning over his desk pointed to the Attorney-General, saying :

“The man who obtains goods by false pretences is placed behind prison bars, but the man who obtains the votes of the people by false pretences is made Chief Law Officer of the Crown for this province.”

Bowser came back with a caustic reply. He may have been wrong as to the numbers of Japanese mentioned, but was right as to the principle on the information he had in hand. If he had been as bad as the member for Delta tried to make out, why had the Liberals not opposed him in Vancouver when he had to go back there for re-election on his appointment to the Cabinet ?

“As for the member for Delta,” he continued, “he has lost his sobriquet of Honest John, and is known from one end of the province to the other as Talking John.”

He declared that wherever John had spoken it had been followed by a stampede to the Conservative side, and concluded with a warm defence of the Government.

“When the appeal to the country comes, whether this year or the next, there will be many faces missing from the other side of the House, and not least among them that of the member for Delta.”

He finished in a storm of applause, and I noticed that John joined in by thumping on his desk. He could admire a fighting speech even if directed against himself.

In the course of the session Bowser introduced an amendment for the purpose of better securing their wages to workers in mines. John, as a consistent Oppositionist, opposed it, on the ground that it was discriminatory, and there were others worse paid than miners, who needed protection much more.

“Well,” remarked Bowser with a smile, “will my honourable friend accept the amendment if I put in farm labourers ?”

John replied that the farm labourer was already well protected. “He can garnish the crop and seize the stock and even take the stool from under the milkmaid while milking the cow,” he declared.

On a former occasion Bowser had introduced a Bill known as the Natal Act for the purpose of keeping out Orientals by an educational test.

John congratulated him on his "stump speech," compared him to the Czar of Russia, and suggested that he should have gone back thirty years, when a Mr. Bunster brought into the House of Commons a Bill for prohibiting the immigration of people with hair over five inches long.

After the memorable debate in 1909 John lost no opportunity for a dig at Bowser, and was continually plying him with questions. He was dealing with fisheries, at that time under Bowser's jurisdiction, and asked him how many fishing licences he had issued to Japanese.

The Attorney-General was reading a newspaper and apparently did not hear John, who remarked :

"I notice that the honourable gentleman is more interested in reading the *Times* than answering my question."

"I am listening," said the Attorney-General without looking up from his paper.

"It is a pity the honourable gentleman does not at other times listen more and talk less," said John sarcastically. "It might be better for this House."

But he got no satisfaction, though on one occasion Bowser remarked :

"My friend makes so many statements that if I tried to attend to them all I would have nothing else to do."

"The Attorney-General has never been able to refute any statements I have made," said John stoutly.

John's frequent questions of the Attorney-General caught the attention of Colonel Lowry, a well-known wit of the time, who was running a small paper in the interior known as *The Greenwood Ledge*. He suggested as the next set of questions :

"Mr. Oliver asked the Attorney-General :

1. "Are you a twin ?
2. "If so, why, and of what sex is the other ?
3. "Was any other member of the Cabinet associated with you in this ?
4. "Is it true that the Premier and the Commissioner of Works were responsible for the Westminster Confession of Faith ?"

Another irreverent scribe remarked that the contests of the Attorney-General and the member for Delta seemed likely to culminate in another Row upon the Stanislaus as described by Bret Harte, with Honest John substituted for Truthful James, and some future poet would be able to write :

“ John Oliver from Delta raised a point of order when
Billy Bowser's pastepot took him in the abdomen.
Then John smiled a sort of sickly smile and curled up on the floor,
And the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.”

However, their contests never got beyond a battle of words and wit.

In the discussion of amendments to the Game Act John incidentally related his adventure in bear hunting. An amendment was proposed to prohibit the trapping of bears to reserve them for the hunters.

John objected. He contended that bears should be killed by any means, as they frightened the children in many parts of the province. As for going after them with a gun he had tried it once, and resolved that if the bear would let him alone he would do the same.

He moved an amendment to prohibit the killing of feathered game with rifles.

He was advised that hunters hardly ever used rifles for that purpose.

“ No,” said John, “ and it's a good job they don't, or the population would get smaller.”

SCENE 31. THE OBJECTOR

JOHN strongly objected to Sunday hunting. He declared that when sitting in his verandah on a Sunday afternoon the continual “ popping ” of city sportsmen around his farm was “ a confounded nuisance.”

He objected to revising the rules of the House to eliminate obstruction on the ground that he had found obstruction a useful weapon against the Government.

In fact, John was dubbed by the newspapers as “ the Usual

Objector.” He said that if the Government did not take advantage of the suggestions of the Opposition, “It is not our fault, but is due to the density of the gentlemen opposite.” He found nearly all his motions and amendments voted down and asserted :

“The Government cannot resist our arguments, but when it comes to votes I know no way of resisting them except, perhaps, by a double-barrelled shotgun.”

He was not always as reverent in his language as procedure would seem to demand. A vote was passed for the construction of a new Court-house in Vancouver.

“Billy Bowser’s kids are getting it all,” he remarked.

On another occasion he complained : “They talk about my ingenuity in finding grievances. Why, sir, my life is made a burden by the injustices heaped upon my shoulders by the Government of this province.”

It was a period of real-estate booming, and lands were being bought by speculators all over the province and held out of use for profit. It was a condition with which he, who had always relied on work rather than on chance, was utterly out of sympathy.

“I appeal to you,” he said, addressing the Government, “to give back the land to the people. It is the right which God Almighty gave them, and if you withhold it from them I say that you are criminally guilty in that.”

It was a strong statement, but fell flat against the resistless trend of the times. There was rising in the Government’s favour a tide of public sentiment that was to sweep John out of the House for several years.

It was about this time that I was assigned to report a meeting that was typical of much of John’s country campaigning between sessions. There was no election in sight just then, and interest in politics was dim, but he took advantage of the lull to carry the war into his neighbouring constituency of Richmond, represented in the Legislature by my employer, the Hon. F. L. Carter-Cotton, who instructed me to report faithfully John’s attacks upon himself.

The meeting was held at night in one of those little, country schoolhouses that have a big blackboard on the wall and a platform slightly raised for the teacher’s desk. It was a damp, wintry evening. The stove smoked and intensified the dim

eeriness of the light shed by two stable lanterns. The audience consisted of fourteen men and a dog. The farmers, squeezed uncomfortably into the children's desks, were mere shapes in the shadows of the background. The dog, stretched sleeping by the stove, alone appeared in a posture of comfort. John, standing by the teacher's desk, unwittingly threw a great, bearded silhouette of himself on the wall behind. He talked away and pounded the desk occasionally as he pointed out the sins of the Government in general and of Carter-Cotton in particular.

"And this is your member, gentlemen," he would say after emphasizing some poignant dereliction.

But the speech evoked no applause. Interest was dead, and John's attitude by the desk seemed to be that of a cranky old dominie lecturing his class rather than of one who spoke "the applause of listening Senates to command." Occasionally as he spoke the silence was disturbed by a farmer rising to put another chunk of wood in the stove or by the dog rousing himself to scratch his ear. But John persevered doggedly to the end, when he was greeted by a perfunctory hand clapping, though whether it was a sign of congratulation or relief it would be hard to say.

Someone suggested that these nocturnal gatherings of John's resembled the burial of Sir John Moore, and some future poet would write of this interment of his political opponents :

"He buried 'em darkly at dead o' night,
The rubes in the tight seats turning
By the struggling lanterns' dusky light
And the fire in the box stove burning."

SCENE 32. LEADING FORLORN HOPES

THE Liberals faced the next election in a rather dispirited condition. Their leader, J. A. Macdonald, had resigned to become Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal for the province. The leadership logically shifted to John Oliver's shoulders. A cartoonist of the day represented a lean knight in armour handing his sword to a stout, mailed yeoman and saying : "A tried blade to a trusty hand, John."

John wielded the blade to such advantage as he could, but it was something like Mrs. Partington's mop against the Atlantic waves. McBride and Bowser were astute leaders who knew :

“ The seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand and make
Their mighty following mightier yet.”

McBride made an agreement with Mackenzie & Mann to extend the Canadian Northern lines to the Pacific Coast. They asked in return that the Government would guarantee the bonds necessary to raise the money for construction. This the Government undertook to do. The scheme was sprung in the very sweep of a real-estate boom. People had been staking their thousands in lots, in the Vancouver district more especially, and here was the very thing to make the values bounce. Already people had bought lots for \$500 in one month to sell them for \$1,000 in the next. It was the virus of a fever for more.

John recognized the strength of the Government's appeal, and decided that his best course was to counter-attack with a better scheme. He contended that if the credit of the province had to be pledged it should be for railways to open up new territory and not to duplicate existing lines as Mackenzie & Mann proposed. With this in view he worked out his own plan of railway development.

All this he duly set down on a map drawn by his own hand, with lines of different thickness in various colours, showing railways already built, those to be built under Dominion subsidy, those that should be given to the Canadian Northern, and those to be considered. “ John Oliver's map ” became famous in that campaign, and was a subject of much ridicule from Government supporters. Some declared that John had drawn it on his knees on the floor, face downward to the ground, and in this attitude of prayer had invoked a miracle, so that when he wanted to build a railway he did it by using a ruler and drawing his paint brush across the map.

Still, there was logic in his explanation, but that map with its colours proved an ineffective banner against the Government's insignia of a signed agreement in black and white. Like many who aspire to go to Heaven, the people preferred the practical

benefits of the present to the vague glories of a celestial future. Like Joseph's coat, John's map of many colours might have been exhibited to future generations as a sign and a reason why the wolves had so completely devoured him.

John's first lieutenant in the campaign was F. C. Wade, of Vancouver (afterwards to become Agent-General for the province in England, where, like his predecessor, Sir Richard McBride, he died). Wade was clever and caustic. He described McBride as the white-haired wonder of the Tory circus touring the country with Bowser as the brass band, and added that the projected Canadian Northern Railway was doomed to failure, as it would simply have to feed on the crumbs that fell from the C.P.R.'s table.

John stumped the country with characteristic vigour. Not content with contesting Delta alone he accepted nomination in the aristocratic city of Victoria, where he was opposed by McBride in person. He went there in his countrified clothes and square-toed boots to shock the tastes of the cultured with grammar and pronunciation as careless as his clothing. In his own constituency he was opposed by his former opponent, young Frank Mackenzie, who was prosecuting a vigorous campaign.

The expected happened. John and his party went down to overwhelming defeat. He was beaten and badly beaten both in Victoria and Delta, and of the Liberal candidates the only survivors were H. C. Brewster, for Alberni, and John Jardine, for Esquimalt.

On the following morning the newspapers telephoned John at his Delta home for his opinion of the results.

"You may say that after yesterday I am out of politics for good," was his reply.

This was characteristic of John's emotional tendencies. After defeat, downcast for a while, and then up and at it again with head bloody but unbowed.

For two years after the disastrous defeat under his leadership John was allowed to rusticate in peace. He returned to his cows and pigs like Cincinnatus to his plough. Then came the Dominion election of 1911 on the issue of the Laurier Government's proposed reciprocal trade agreement with the United

States. Canada was prosperous at the time, and the people wanted no change of that kind. The federal constituency of New Westminster in which John lived was represented by his old political foe, J. D. Taylor, proprietor of the *Columbian* newspaper, his most severe critic. Taylor was a strong man in the district, the agreement was resented by the farmers as against their interests, the appeal to loyalty aroused their strong pro-British instincts, and New Westminster appeared as a hopeless cause for any Liberal candidate.

By this time John had recovered his fighting spirit, and when appealed to consented to carry his party's banner in this political charge of the six hundred. His position was summed up to me by a New Westminster journalist :

“ Politics is a queer game. There is old John Oliver stumping the Fraser Valley in favour of a policy that is dead against his own interests and that of all his neighbours. He hasn't a chance.”

John did not agree that reciprocity was against the interest of the Fraser Valley farmers, since he argued that what was good for Canada would be good for them all, and it would open a broader market for them in the United States. But the farmers held that it would result in their home markets being deluged with American produce. The result was that John was hopelessly defeated, and his party at Ottawa was driven from power.

Still John's political battles were not yet over. He had been with his own most willing consent superseded in the leadership of the party by his friend Brewster, with whom he retained most cordial relations.

In the meantime a wonderful tide of prosperity continued to sweep over British Columbia. You could sell a lot or a farm one week, and if a week later you tried to re-purchase you would find that it had sky-rocketed far beyond your financial ability to follow ; and everyone was well satisfied and pleased with the powers that be.

So successful had McBride's railway policy proved that his Government negotiated another agreement with Foley, Welsh, & Stewart, the railway contractors, for the construction of the

famous Pacific Great Eastern that was to connect Vancouver with Prince George and eventually push through to the Peace River country.

On this issue another provincial election was announced in the early part of 1912. It was well timed. A year later things would not have gone so happily, but here they were on the very crest of the wave and it was a grand opportunity to utilize it to sweep them once more into another assured term of security.

I was assigned by the *News-Advertiser* to accompany McBride and Bowser on a campaign tour through the interior. In reality it was not so much a campaign tour as a triumphal march. They were greeted with bands and fireworks like returned conquerors—and they were a great team. McBride, with his fine appearance, dignity, suavity, and good humour, led off in a popular appeal, and he was followed by Bowser in a smashing defence of their policies which demolished all opposition. The one led, the other drove. It proved to be McBride's last campaign, and throughout he was a most lovable and jovial companion.

But this is all by the way and in some explanation of John Oliver's third political setback. One of John's weaknesses in his last provincial campaign was that one of the lines in the Canadian Northern scheme was to run directly through his own constituency, so that again he appeared to be working against his own interests.

After two crushing defeats he can hardly have felt very willing to enter another hopeless contest, but he did so. John was not a reader of Browning. Had he been I think he would have been fond of saying with Rabbi Ben Ezra :

“ Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids not sit nor stand but go !
Our joy be three parts pain,
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the throe ! ”

At least it seemed in those years as if he was no sooner down after one defeat than he was up again and ready to face another. If no one else could be found to raise the banner of a hopeless cause John Oliver could always be depended upon, and so within

six months of his smashing defeat in the Dominion election he was out to contest Delta again in the provincial fray. He had no railway map this time, and knew that he was diving to the bottom of the poll, but he took the plunge. Party loyalty demanded that the seat should not be let go without a contest. It was a chance to hammer at the Government for what he considered their extravagant commitments and he took it.

His opponents recognized his position, and were disposed to treat him leniently. As one of them told me :

“ We know that old John recognizes that he has no chance and we admire him for his fighting spirit.”

Under the circumstances it was an uneventful contest, though John did not shirk meeting his adversaries on the platform and having it out with them. His opponent was again Frank McKenzie, and when election day came he had the biggest majority ever recorded against John Oliver in his old home constituency.

John had at least plenty of companions in political misery, for not a single member of his party was left in the Legislative Assembly. The only Opposition the McBride Government had to face was such as might be afforded by the two Socialists, Parker Williams and Jack Place, who had been elected by narrow majorities in the coal-mining districts of Newcastle and Nanaimo. The fluent and ready-witted Hawthornthwaite had retired from politics for the time to devote himself to private business.

John also retired to his Delta farm to cogitate for the next four years on the uncertainty of human affairs.

SCENE 33. AN INTERLUDE

For a time we must soften the music and turn down the lights. John Oliver is no longer a prominent man in the affairs of British Columbia.

Some outlet for his public activity he found in acting as Reeve and School Trustee of his Municipality of Delta. His Reeveship came to a sudden pause. His son Arthur had tendered for the construction of three miles of trunk road in the municipality.

The Councillors objected that it would be improper to let the contract to the son of the Reeve.

John grabbed a piece of paper and promptly wrote out his resignation of the Reeveship.

"Now, will you let the boy have the contract?" he asked.

Under such conditions there could be no refusal, and John, free from office, took hold of the contract himself and pushed it to a successful conclusion.

In those defeatist years his interest in local affairs occasionally brought him to Victoria to interview committees when the House was in session. Once I met him in the lobby peering through the doors of the Legislative Chamber.

"Glad to see you back in your old haunts," I said. "I suppose you rather miss all this."

"Waal," he replied, "I'm surprised to find how little I do miss it."

He was looking hale and hearty as ever, and I congratulated him on his appearance.

"I never felt better," he remarked with a smile, "but I'm dead politically."

"Never mind. You'll have a resurrection yet."

He laughed, said he didn't know much about that, and didn't greatly care. But he believed in the law of compensation, and I think never quite lost hope.

On the farm conditions were prosperous. The family was growing up and the elder boys fitting themselves for useful positions in the world. On Arthur, the second son, largely devolved the management of the farm, and John was left free to devote himself to the thresher and sawmill, and contracts for taking out poles and timbers. In all these his energy found an agreeable outlet.

"I passed along one day," an amiable political opponent of his told me, "and there was John in overalls and with an old straw hat on his head slogging away with his men, lifting logs and pitching out poles with any of them."

Though John was more than half-way between fifty and sixty it was evident that his bodily vigour had not much abated.

His activities outside the farm at this period enabled him to be

of service to his neighbours at a critical time. The slump that followed the real-estate boom had spread out into the country, and some of the poorer families, even in rural Delta, were in distressful circumstance. It stirred John's emotional nature and he did what he could to help them. As one of his neighbours told me after he had passed away :

"He was a kind-hearted old man, that. I remember in about 1914 just before the war many of the families around there were desperately hard up, but John kept his sawmill going and spread out his operations so that he could set as many of them to work as possible, though I doubt whether in the state of business at that time he was making any profit."

It was characteristic of him. He wished to help where he could and would rather do it in this way than load them with a humiliating charity.

Once when I was travelling with him along the country roads near New Westminster, he told the driver to stop the car at a certain point, saying : "I must step off and see how that half-brother of mine is getting on."

We paused before a neat-looking little wooden cottage with a fine garden and orchard attached. In the orchard an elderly man with a long, white beard was cutting the grass with a scythe and with him John conversed. I learned that this was Thomas Lomas, the elder half-brother who had elected to remain in England when the rest of the family emigrated. In his old age John had brought him out and helped to establish him in a little home of his own. He predeceased his distinguished brother by about two years.

One incident in those quiet years of John's life I well recall. At a Liberal convention in Vancouver he had relinquished the leadership of the party to his friend H. C. Brewster, who spoke warmly of him and said, "We cannot do without our old war-horse," and expressed the hope that they would long continue to have the benefit of his wise counsel and fearless fighting power.

At this convention it was proposed to insert a clause in the party platform in favour of giving municipalities the right to prohibit the sale of intoxicating liquor. One astute politician pointed out that such a move would result in loss of votes to the

Liberal Party, since it would unite the liquor interests against them, while the temperance people would, as usual, split their votes between the two main parties.

"I am well aware that we shall get no votes for it," said John. "But we should adopt it because it is right."

It was carried, but never came to anything, since by the time the Liberals came into power again the Great War was on, and local option was lost in wider issues.

In those quiet days on the farm John was but as the seed in the pod waiting to burst into the sunlight. Fate was silently working and great things were in store.

SCENE 34. CONSERVATIVE RECESSION

IN that last sweeping victory of 1912 McBride had reached the high point of his career. Soon afterwards he was knighted, and Sir Richard wore his title with the becoming dignity with which Nature had gifted him.

Then from the top of the hill the downward sweep began. The real-estate boom collapsed and was followed by the inevitable slump. The bubble of fictitious values was pricked. Building activity ceased. There were hundreds out of work, and there were bread lines in the streets of Vancouver. The Government's revenues crumbled, but their obligations remained.

Within the Conservative Party itself there were signs of dissension. It seems that a political aggregation, like a nation, retains its unity best when threatened by the pressure of its foes. A top-heavy majority becomes unwieldy, and lacking the cement of opposition crumbles into fragments.

Sir Richard McBride resigned the Premiership he had held so triumphantly for twelve memorable years and went overseas to become Agent-General for British Columbia in London. He was well fitted to represent his province in the capital of the Empire, but misfortune followed him. Disease overcame him and partial blindness ensued. He resigned with the desire to spend his last days in his native land. But it was not to be. With arrangements already made for his return he passed away. His death

struck a peculiar note of sadness. He was still in his forties, and after his early triumphs died far from his home and friends. Kind and courteous to the last he was sincerely mourned by the many who had known and loved him.

The leadership of the Government had fallen without dispute on the sturdy shoulders of the brilliant and energetic W. J. Bowser. But he found himself in command of a toboggan, and the best he could do was to steer it down the hill so that he would arrive with the least disaster at the bottom. The bursting of the real-estate bubble had been followed by financial disaster. The Bank of Vancouver, the only provincial bank, had broken. The Dominion Trust Company, the largest financial institution in the province, had plunged with the crack of a rifle into headlong hopeless bankruptcy. Hundreds of hitherto well-to-do citizens found themselves penniless, and the lamentations of the ruined were heard in the land. All this reflected with poetic justice against the Government which had received so much credit for the sunny years before.

Then came the Great War. It cleaned up the unemployed, but it did not clean up the slate for the Government. By-elections in the focal cities of Victoria and Vancouver resulted in the return of H. C. Brewster, Liberal leader, for the former; while Vancouver elected by a large majority M. A. Macdonald, a young man of great oratorical ability destined to become Attorney-General in the next Government.

The handwriting on the wall could not be mistaken. The days of the Government were numbered, and it was in a tumult of charges of scandal and incompetency that they entered on the next election. Bowser fought it out spiritedly to the last, but he was waving a broom in a whirlwind, and when the ballots were counted he found himself one of nine survivors in a House that contained also thirty-six Liberals and two Independents.

SCENE 35. THE HONOURABLE JOHN

JOHN OLIVER naturally took his part in that election of 1916. He did not this time contest his old constituency of Delta, but accepted nomination for the neighbouring riding of Dewdney, where he was elected by a substantial majority. Premier Brewster insisted that he should come into his Government, and he became the first Liberal Minister of Agriculture and Railways for British Columbia.

So at the age of sixty we find the rugged farmer of Delta installed in a large office with a carpeted floor and a shiny-topped desk bedecked with ivory push buttons, which appeared to be attached by strings to secretaries and deputies, who at a buzz were drawn into his presence. After his many years of conflicts and defeats John's hair and whiskers had grown whiter and his body stouter, and he used steel-rimmed spectacles for reading and writing.

As was his wont he plunged at once into a sea of trouble. It swirled up chiefly over the railway end of his responsibilities. The contractors of the Pacific Great Eastern, begun under the rule of his predecessors, were far behind in their building schedule and were showing signs of financial stricture. John looked into the affairs of the Company, and at the next session of the Legislature requested an investigation by a Select Committee.

The investigation ran a troublesome course. Essential witnesses had disappeared and some had gone overseas to the war. There was a hint of a half-million dollar reserve from which campaign funds were to be drawn to assist the ruling party, but as to whether this had ever been done or to what extent, no evidence was available. Bowser, called upon to testify, blankly refused, and others were equally dumb. Writs for the prosecution of missing men were issued, but all of no avail.

The contractors ceased building and stopped service on the line. Settlers, loggers, and sawmill men who had gone into the territory complained bitterly. From Vancouver came insistent demands that the Government take over the line and continue its construction and operation.

John had little faith in the railway and was reluctant to

continue either building or operation, but faith had to be kept with the settlers, and to abandon the road at this stage would have been regarded as a sign of want of confidence in the country it was intended to serve. Under the circumstances John tackled the job of bargaining with the contractors for the Government acquisition of the railway.

It was a long and tedious task, involving a multitude of details as to the value of engines, cars, water-tanks, picks and shovels, and all the vast impedimenta surrounding a railway and its construction. John, with his dogged perseverance, went into every nook and cranny of its ramifications and at last concluded an agreement which was pronounced outrageous by his opponents, superb by his friends, and generally satisfactory by the Independent Press.

It provided that the Government should take over the railway with its charter from Vancouver to Prince George and for further extension to the Peace River country. It had been built as far as Clinton in Cariboo, and so far as John was concerned it would have stopped there for some years at least. But public opinion, especially in the great centre of Vancouver, was insistent that it should be carried on. The argument that prevailed most cogently was that there were hundreds of returned soldiers out of work and further construction would provide them with wages to start for themselves and open up new country in which they might settle. So, with some reluctance, the Government decided to continue construction and carried it as far as Quesnel, where to this time of writing it remains.

All this subjected John to violent criticism, which he as indignantly repelled. He said he had "sweat blood" in order to get the best terms of settlement for the province. But he never liked the P.G.E. Railway, and had no hesitation in saying so. Referring to it once in the Legislature he said :

"I am not going to become the foster-father of this illegitimate offspring of two unnatural parents. It was a waif left on my doorstep. It was conceived in the sin of political necessity ; it was begotten in the iniquity of a half-million dollar campaign fund. I refuse to be the godfather of any such foundling."

SCENE 36. NIGHTSHIRT LEGISLATION

IN his duties as Minister of Agriculture John also had his problems. One of these arose from the demands of soldiers returning from the war that the province should co-operate with the Dominion settling them upon the land. John still saw visions and dreamed dreams. Thinking over these problems in the night an idea occurred to him. He got out of bed, and sitting in his nightshirt with a lead pencil in his hand and some sheets of paper before him he drew up the "Land Settlement Act," which, with few alterations, stands on the Statute books of the province to this day.

This Act provided for the appointment of a Board with power to take over areas suitable for settlement, within reasonable reach of roads and railways. If within these areas was land held by speculators, which they were doing nothing to improve, it might also be acquired by paying them a price equivalent to that of the surrounding land, and disputes could be settled by arbitration. The Board was also empowered to loan money to settlers to get them established until they were in a condition to repay.

When John was moving the second reading of his Bill in the House he spoke feelingly of one phase it was meant to deal with :

"I have seen women of birth and education with their little children buried away in inaccessible places, where all they have to live on is the vegetables the settlers grow in their gardens or the game they hunt in the woods. Under this Act the Board would have power to take over their holdings and substitute farms in a settled community where they could live as white people should."

The Act, in operation, fell far short of realizing the dreams of its author. The settler in such circumstances is apt to be too much like a wall in need of a prop. So long as the prop remains he retains a precarious erectness, but once it is removed his prospects fall in fragments and dust. In a few years, of the first settlers in these areas but a scanty remainder was left.

John was continually at war with powerful organizations whose interests, he felt, clashed with those of the country.

"Is this province," he asked once, "to be governed by the people or the railway corporations?"

It was in this spirit that he came into conflict with Mackenzie & Mann, of the Canadian Northern Railway. He found that for some months they had paid no rent for running their trains over the New Westminster Bridge across the Fraser River. When Sir William Mackenzie next visited the coast John invited him to his office, and took the matter up with him in his blunt way.

Sir William smiled and tried to evade him in his diplomatic manner, assuring him that they would deal with the matter, without committing himself to any definite promise.

"Very well, Sir William," was John's ultimatum. "Unless your rent is paid up by the end of this month the signal at the end of the bridge will go down against the Canadian Northern trains."

The rent was paid.

In his first session as a Minister of the Crown, John appeared to be more cautious and less given to drastic and extreme statements than in his former Gladstonian position of "greater freedom and less responsibility." He had naturally a few tilts with his former opponent Bowser, who was brilliantly and courageously leading his attenuated Opposition.

"I will live as long in public esteem as the Honourable Minister," he remarked in reference to John, "and leave as big a mark."

"He will leave a bigger mark than I can ever hope to or would wish for under the circumstances," was the sarcastic retort.

That first session of the Liberal Government was in many respects an eventful one. It saw the enactment of women's suffrage, which had been carried on a referendum submitted by the outgoing Bowser Government at the last General Election. This was shortly followed by the election of Mrs. Ralph Smith, who succeeded her deceased husband in a by-election in Vancouver, and had the honour of being one of the first women to sit in any Legislative Assembly in the British Empire. That mid-war session also saw the passing of a Prohibition Act, destined for a much shorter life than the Woman Suffrage Bill.

The new Government had troubles without and within. There were election and campaign-fund scandals; and Attorney-General Macdonald, their most distinguished orator, resigned, to be

replaced by J. W. DeB. Farris, a brilliant young lawyer of Vancouver. Macdonald survived the attacks, was re-elected to the Legislature at the next General Election in Vancouver, and is to-day a Justice of the Court of Appeal for the province.

Throughout all John was regarded as the war horse and shock absorber of the Government, and destiny was swiftly preparing greater responsibilities for him.

SCENE 37. PREMIER OLIVER

ONE of Premier Brewster's promises had been the abolition of patronage in appointments to Government positions. This at once involved him in conflict with that large element, to be found in all party associations, who consider the country's good to be synonymous with their personal welfare. For thirteen years they had not tasted the sweets of office, and they felt that the sourness begotten of long stagnation was due for a saccharine injection. They loudly demanded the dismissal of appointees of the old Government, and their replacement by good Liberals—who were at least liberal to themselves.

Brewster was a conscientious man and resisted these importunities to the utmost of his strength. Many of the employees of the former Government had gone overseas to the war, and on their return he could do no less than see that they were reinstated in their old positions. This was but one of many worries that he balanced in his mind seeking a just conclusion.

“Don't hesitate, Brewster,” said John on one occasion. “Just drive ahead. You'll be no worse in any event than the engineer who was not sure whether he was running on the right track, but said if he met another train coming toward him he'd soon find out.”

In spite of this sage advice it did appear as if the worries of office had a detrimental effect on Premier Brewster's health. In his second session he was called to Ottawa in connection with the war, and John was left to lead the Government in his absence. Premier Brewster never returned alive. Attacked by pneumonia he was taken from the train at Calgary to die a few days later. He

was a man "who revered his conscience as his king," and was given state burial in Victoria among tokens of universal respect.

In the party caucus that followed John was elected to the leadership and became Premier of British Columbia. He had some little hesitation on the ground of lack of education for such a position, but as he told the Legislature once afterwards :

"One of the reasons that prompted me to accept was the thought that my children after me would be able to say that their father had been Premier of the province."

The change in office made no change in John. He wore the same plain tweed clothes and square-toed boots. No ring was ever seen on his fingers, no pendant adorned the chain of his plain silver watch, and he still liked people to call him "John." It was recorded that when he first attended a dinner at Government House, he went attired in a plain, brown suit, and cared not, though all the others stalked like elongated swallows and wore acres of immaculate front. His colleagues in the Government, however, thought such dress scarcely compatible with the dignity of his position, and persuaded him to secure an evening suit for future occasions. John liked neither the trouble nor the expense, but reluctantly yielded.

Had he known it he showed to good advantage in that dress suit. It became his stout form and sturdy breadth of shoulder, while his whitening hair and well-trimmed beard, contrasting with the black cloth, added a touch of statesmanlike dignity. Nor was he troubled by any embarrassing self-consciousness. He would drink tea out of the saucer if it pleased him, and at the same time chat amicably with his neighbouring guests. He was one of those happily constituted beings who can preserve the ease of solitude in the midst of a crowd.

I always thought it rather to his credit that he was never carried away by the social vanity that is the besetting weakness of so many of our successful men—the feeling that urges them to take the wealth they have reaped in Canada to a region where they may hobnob with dukes and earls to the neglect of the land that gave them their fortune and their birth. John dined with princes and aristocrats, but he said little. In Kipling's words he

"Could walk with kings nor lose the common touch."

When he appeared in the Legislature after his elevation to the Premiership he was warmly received ; and his old antagonist Bowser was the first to congratulate him. He welcomed him as a foe worthy of his mettle—after which he proceeded to attack him and his policies right and left. It was in a crucial stage of the war—the period of the German spring drive of 1918, and Bowser did not hesitate to score the Government for what he termed its indifference to the interests of the returned men.

John came back in warm defence, and shaking a finger at the Opposition leader repeated Dr. Johnson's famous dictum, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."

It was rather strong language, but as John once explained to the House : "I did not have the advantages of a University course, like my friend the Leader of the Opposition, to equip myself with the niceties of speech, and in consequence I find it necessary to rely on straight talk which my friends opposite have deemed on various occasions as ungentlemanly."

Nevertheless, in those years when he re-entered the House after his long absence, changes might be noted in John Oliver's speech. Though still careless and guilty of lapses in grammar and pronunciation, his most glaring errors in the latter respect had been overcome. He no longer spoke of "Primier," "Attawney-General" or "hanourable" or "pravince." In his more careless moments he still used "was" for "were" and "is" for "are," but in dictating a letter or delivering a considered speech even these had disappeared and left one wondering at the wealth and correctness of his vocabulary. He had a remarkable aptitude for finding the fitting word.

Bowser declared that John's advent to the leadership of the Government would bring in a new "ism" known as Oliverism, and that "a one-man Government had come into power the night the Bolsheviki of the Liberal Party elected him."

SCENE 38. SOME BLUNT TALK

BOTH inside and outside the House John found it necessary to do some plain talking in that first session of his Premiership. That dark hour of the spring of 1918 before the dawn of Allied victories was a trying time throughout the British Empire, and John, ardent partisan though he was, was quite willing to forget party differences where the welfare of the nation was concerned. Speaking before a public meeting in Victoria he stirred his audience by his rugged eloquence :

“ We are living in an age of great events when human nature is stirred to its very depths, and every man must share his part of the national burden if we are going to weather this time of storm. The interests of Canada and her provinces are greater than those of party, and that man who places selfish motives before those of duty should be branded as a traitor to his country.”

But he had his trouble with the returned men also. It was shortly after this speech that a news article appeared in the *Victoria Colonist* headed :

“ PREMIER HAS HECTIC HOUR WITH SOLDIERS.”

It told how over a thousand of them marched one evening to the Parliament Buildings and presented a petition protesting against the failure of the Dominion Government to conscript all the aliens in the country and make them work out their share of the burden of the war. It asked that the Provincial Government forward it to Ottawa with their endorsement. It further asked that the Provincial Government itself should at once appoint a Civil Service Commissioner to deal with appointments to the Government service.

John replied that while he sympathized with them, the first part of their petition dealt with a matter entirely within the jurisdiction of the Dominion, and he did not consider it a proper and businesslike way of dealing with the matter.

“ We have been charged with being hostile to the soldiers and the Union Government at Ottawa, but I say to you that the Government which does not co-operate with Ottawa or un-

necessarily opposes the administration at Ottawa is not acting in the best interests of Canada," he told them.

By this time there were about 2,500 people on the lawns.

There were cries of "No excuses. What are you going to do about it?" John said that he could only promise that they would take that phase of the petition into consideration. With the second demand that they appoint a Civil Service Commissioner he was still less complaisant. He stood there, a lonely figure facing the multitude, with shoulders squared and grey head defiantly erect.

"I will not receive this motion. It is a bill of indictment against the Government. It is most unfair. The man does not live who can force me to act against my conscience. The Government has been working to the limit of endurance, and we have not had time to attend to this matter, which is one that requires most careful consideration."

Loud "Boos" came from the angry crowd mingled with cries of, "We'll make you take it. What did we put you in for?"

There were other questions, but his replies were drowned in the murmurs of discontent, and as they moved sullenly away he called after them:

"When you think over this to-morrow you will think more of John Oliver for not being over ready with the glad hand." He added that he was the father of sons wearing the uniform, and his personal sympathy was with them. But this did not stay the retreating tide, as the men swept back to the city to hold an indignation meeting among themselves.

It was a time of stress for civilians as well as for soldiers. War coming with the aftermath of the real-estate boom had left many of the municipalities in a hopeless condition financially.

The municipalities sent a big delegation to Victoria imploring the help of the Provincial Government.

John met them in the Executive Chamber, where he sat in his seat at the head of the table, while they were ranged in chairs alongside. He gave them some straight talk on extravagance and its results, for municipal councils had also caught the fever of the boom and had built roads and improvements beyond all probable need.

“ You have called the tune and you will have to pay the piper. The men who compose the Government are not possessed of the power of the Almighty to create something out of nothing. You are faced with the necessity of working out your own salvation. You must produce more and spend less. I have had to do it, and you will have to do it. You have bitten off a big chunk and are smarting under an acute attack of indigestion. One of the things you are most in need of is a surgical operation. I ask you, are you going to repudiate your obligations? No. Then you are going to get down to real business; you are going to doff your broadcloth and don your overalls.”

That last sentence “ doff your broadcloth and don your overalls ” became as a proverb in the province for some years afterwards. It was, as one man pointed out, typically Oliveresque.

SCENE 39. AFTER THE WAR

THE close of 1918 saw the end of the Great War, and after the jubilation which greeted the proclamation of peace came a feverish period of unrest. After the great quake some shocks continued to reverberate throughout the world. These had their repercussion in British Columbia.

The Government of Canada gave free passage for returned soldiers to whatever part of the Dominion they wished to go. Naturally many liked to travel as far as they could on a free pass, and a rather unusual number made for the mild climate of the Pacific Coast. While their pay and bounties lasted they spent freely and values soared to an unheard-of point, but the balloon soon fell in rags and tatters.

This condition created a problem for the Government of British Columbia. Here were thousands of men, their old habits disjointed, and disconnected from their former occupations. They had fought to bring about a better order, and they would not forgo their dreams. One of these was the formation of settlements on the land where they would live self-sustaining lives and all dwell together in rustic peace.

The Federal Government gave such assistance as it could

through the Soldier Settlement Board, but this was not sufficient in the forest lands of British Columbia. The soldiers approached the Provincial Government, who offered them any vacant land they might choose. They chose not too well, and then asked the Government for further assistance in clearing and making the land cultivable. The scheme looked feasible. It was proposed that the Government put in machinery for clearing, and hire the returned soldiers who were to occupy the farms. The Government would pay them the ordinary daily wages for such work, and with this money saved the men would be able to start on the farms and repay the cost of clearing to the Government from their produce as the years went by.

John Oliver had little faith in such assisted schemes, but a condition had to be met. These men had fought for their country and could not be allowed to starve. If they were to be helped it would be better that it should be through their own labour than from any charitable gift, and while sure that the Government would lose financially on the scheme, he held that if the land were cleared it would be an asset to the country for all time.

The history of the Merville and Creston settlements is too well known to need recapitulation here. They ploughed their way to financial disaster, and of the dreamers of dreams but few inhabit the rural solitudes now.

One concession inevitably leads to another. Returned men trained in trades and commerce asked why, if men who desired to go farming could be assisted on the land, should they not also receive some assistance in re-establishing themselves in industry? There was no argument against the logic of this appeal. A Department of Industry was organized for the purpose of assisting business and manufacturing enterprises with loans to be repaid from the profits, and John Oliver added to his other activities that of Minister of Industry. In this connection his chief occupation seemed to be that of turning down applications for loans.

"If there is any reason for it, I turn them down," he observed. "We are likely to lose enough on the best of them without letting the weak ones in."

It proved much as he expected, but out of the ruck a number

of good industries were established, and again the Government justified its action by pointing to a condition of unemployment among the veterans that had to be met.

There was still another of these proposals which John opposed, but the Legislature carried through in spite of him. This was the Sumas drainage scheme. Sumas Lake shone like a gem in the green setting of the fertile prairie lands that lie on the south side of the Fraser River in the valley between New Westminster and Chilliwack, but it was a source of swampy sedges and swarms of mosquitoes that blackened the sky, drove the cattle crazy, and blistered their owners with torture unhallowed and profane. Under its water lay 10,000 acres of fertile alluvial soil, and around its edges was another 20,000 acres swampy and subject to flooding at high water. It seemed a comparatively simple matter to divert the waters of the Vedder River which fed it and to carry them to the Fraser River below.

An engineer estimated that it would be done for about a million and a half dollars. If the Government would undertake it they might be repaid by the sale of the reclaimed land in the lake bottom, while the owners of the shore lands would willingly bear their share of the cost to compensate for the enhanced value of their acreage. Thus would 30,000 acres be added to the fertile lands of the province at no cost to anyone.

But John had practical experience in dyking and distrusted the appraisals of technical men. He went in person to Sumas and addressed the landholders interested at a meeting held in a schoolhouse there. By this time the engineer's estimate of cost had been raised by three hundred thousand dollars, but John warned them that they would probably find if they went on with it that it would cost far more than that. His experience of engineers' estimates had been that they were almost invariably below the final cost, and he warned the landholders that if they went into the scheme the Government would not be responsible for a dollar of the cost they would incur.

In spite of this they signed an almost unanimous petition asking that the work go on. John's forebodings were more than fulfilled. Instead of \$1,800,000, the completed cost was in excess of \$4,600,000. The contractors who first undertook it failed and

the Government was compelled to carry it to completion. Bad weather washed down the first dykes and delayed the work. It was found necessary to build on a larger and more comprehensive scale than had been expected, and the costs piled up.

The owners of the adjoining land complained of the heavy taxation it would entail following a cost for which they were not responsible. John reminded them of his warning, and stubbornly held out against them, but a succeeding Government shouldered the loss.

SCENE 40. TILTS IN THE HOUSE

JOHN as Premier and Minister indulged in less repartee in the Legislature than in the old days when he had been the truculent free lance of the Opposition, but he still had occasional tilts with his old antagonist Bowser. The latter had been twitting him for his attacks on capitalists and corporations, when he was one of the greatest capitalists in the House himself.

"I would remind the House of this," replied John. "My friend lives in a big house on the top of the hill, while I live in a rented cottage down in the city."

This was before he had purchased a home in Victoria. When he did so he still occupied an unpretentious bungalow of modest dimensions.

In dealing with a Bill affecting agriculture Mr. Bowser remarked :
"Most farmers are honest."

"My honourable friend is getting very cautious," replied John.
"It would not do for him to say *all* farmers are honest, or I might be included in the definition."

John was emotional, and at times when deeply moved in speech his eyes would water. In discussing the eternal question of the treatment of returned soldiers, Bowser remarked :

"The Premier is turning a remarkable somersault. The other day in talking about these people he could scarcely speak for the tears of sympathy in his eyes."

"That may be," retorted John, "but I would like to see tears

of sympathy in his eyes. You might as well expect red blood from a herring."

It was suggested once that he should resign to take the chairmanship of a proposed Public Utilities Commission.

"I have no intention of resigning," John told the House frankly. "I like the job I am in and the pay is good, but the trouble is, I don't get time to spend it, as I go home too tired at night to get the advantage of it." And he sat down chuckling, to munch another peppermint.

John stated the position between Bowser and himself quite frankly.

"There is no political love lost between me and the Leader of the Opposition," he told the House. "I would put him out of business to-morrow if I could, and I have no doubt he would reciprocate."

On another occasion he likened his opponent to the Napoleon he resembled. "Napoleon was a most ambitious man, and like his counterpart in this House, when he reached the pinnacle of his ambition he had a great and sudden fall."

Bowser declared that John was only Premier on sufferance, and that his party had never been elected under his leadership.

John reminded him that he had been in a similar position after the resignation of Sir Richard McBride, and asked what he had done about it.

"We went to the country," said Bowser.

"Yes," replied John, "you went, but you didn't come back."

Nevertheless when John, as Premier, invited the members of the Legislature to a sessional dinner at the Empress Hotel, Mr. Bowser was an honoured guest. He joined in the toast to the Premier as host with a few words of personal goodwill, holding that the differences of politics should not be carried into private life, but he tempered his congratulations with a little story :

"My position here to-night reminds me of two old neighbours, Smith and Jones, who had been enemies for years, but once when Smith was very sick and it was feared he would die they induced him to make his peace with Jones. So he was called in and they shook hands, but as Smith fell back on the bed he remarked :

“ ‘ But you understand, brother Jones, that this only holds good in case I die.’ ”

So Mr. Bowser advised those present that unless this occurred the amity might prove of short duration. In reality he had a great deal of honest admiration for John.

“ The old man is worth all the rest of them put together,” he told me once. “ It is a shame that they put so much work on his shoulders.”

But had he known the truth John enjoyed the shouldering.

When he became Premier the horde of party office seekers who had pestered Premier Brewster pounced upon him. He frankly stated his position :

“ I hold that other things being equal, I would rather have one of my own political persuasion appointed to work under me than any political opponent, because I feel that I could work in harmony with him and trust him better. But this idea should never be carried to the detriment of the public service.”

A serious and well-meaning friend warned him that “ party henchmen were crowding around the patronage trough like pigs, and some were getting fat at the public expense.”

“ All right,” said John grimly. “ If you’re right we’ll have to make some changes. Down in the Delta we farmers work on the principle that the hog that gets fat first will be the one to be killed off first.”

On more than one occasion it proved so. He would not, if he knew it, tolerate incompetency or dishonesty on the part of the most-favoured party appointee. One ardent party follower wrote complaining of the number of servants of the former Government who were being retained in positions that should be given to party friends. John reminded him that the Liberals had been elected on a “ non-patronage ” platform, and they could not honourably violate their promises. In fact, some of the Conservative appointees, men who took no part in politics and attended to their duties, were among his most trusted officials.

In the session of 1920, at the height of the post-war inflation, John made a memorable speech in the budget debate. It was an era of high speculation that he warmly condemned.

“Too many of our people have run away with the idea of sudden riches to be got from subsidising railway corporations and inflating the price of land. That is not the proper way to wealth, and I tell you that the blue denim overall and the cotton jumper are just as honourable as wearing the broadcloth. I can never see that there is anything degrading in work.

“I have dug ditches by the side of Chinamen, when every morsel of food I carried to my mouth bore the imprint of my fingers in dirt, and I was just as good a man then as I am now and in the opinion of some members of this House a better man.

“The present generation must legislate for the future and class legislation must cease. We are disintegrating our national life in this way. It is true now as ever that no man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself. We owe a duty to posterity and have no right to mortgage a future generation to pay our present debts. We should each strive earnestly by work and thrift to improve the condition of this province of ours so richly endowed by Providence, never forgetting the words of the Divine Teacher, ‘Let him that would be greatest among you serve him that is least.’ ”

John’s conduct of that session won general admiration. The *Western Witness*, a weekly published in Vancouver, said :

“Than Mr. Oliver there is no politician who commands more universally the respect, admiration, and confidence of the people. He is a man who does things. His courage, his patience, his fearlessness seem to be unbounded, while his probity has become a provincial standard. Psychologically he is or may become the man of destiny, the prepared man for the special work.”

SCENE 41. THE LIBEL SUIT

JOHN swept to the close of his second session as Premier among pæans of acclaim, but it finished in a storm that momentarily threatened disaster.

It swept down from the Portland Canal country, on the borders of Alaska, where the Dolly Varden mine was located. Though bearing the name of a favourite heroine of Dickens, this mine had not charmed the Government into the paths of love and peace.

The owners had let a contract to the Taylor Engineering Company to build a railway from tidewater to the mine. A dispute as to costs arose between the railway contractors and mine owners. The owners refused certain payments and the contractors appealed to the Legislature. A Select Committee was appointed to investigate, and on its recommendation the Government introduced an Act validating the claim of the railway builders against the Company. As this Act had lapsed, John proposed to renew it at the close of the session.

R. T. Elliott, an able and respected lawyer of Victoria, generally regarded as a Liberal sympathizer, was chief counsel for the Dolly Varden Company, but his affiliations did not prevent him from championing the cause of his clients with a violent attack on John. The first assault came in the form of a telegram from Elliott, who was in Vancouver at the time. It was delivered to John about midnight of what was intended to be the last night sitting of the Legislature for that session, and he read it aloud to the House.

It accused the Government of interfering with the courts and private litigation as a result of secret lobbying by men possessed of money and influence, and it carried with it "the certain knowledge that corrupt and wicked influences had been successful in imposing their will on the Legislature and the Government." It pointed out that the Premier himself had strongly protested against such practices, and yet they found him here in the closing hours of the session introducing a measure closing access to the courts of justice in betrayal of Liberal principles and of his pledges to the people who had elected him.

As John read this missive his face became red from the fires of wrath within, and he finished like a boiler ready to burst.

"That," he declared, "is one of the strongest statements of alleged fraud and the taking of money for corrupt practices that was ever sent to a Premier of any province and," he roared, thumping the desk till it shook, "I want to say right here and now that I don't propose to take any such thing from any living man. I don't have to."

He gave a history of the case justifying the Government's attitude and not forgetting to interlard such terms as "specula-

tion" and "rake-off" as incentives for the telegram. He declared that it was necessary for the Legislature to step in to protect the men who would be robbed of their hard-earned wages if they did not.

"What of the men who put hundreds of thousands of dollars into the development of this property?" he asked. "Are they to be robbed of their rights by a gang of freebooters? I tell you, there is no man living who can send a message of that nature accusing me as Premier of corrupt practices and get away with it. I will not stand for it, I will not tolerate it."

John finished his philippic in a storm of applause. "The old man is hot to-night," we remarked in the press gallery.

But if John was choleric he had plenty of company, for had not the entire Legislature been accused of amenity to corrupt influences?

Fred Anderson, of Kamloops, moved that Mr. Elliott be brought before the bar of the House to answer for his statements.

"No," said John. "He will have to answer before the bar of public opinion. I would not defile the bar of the House by having him appear here." He was still sizzling.

But Mr. Elliott was not yet through. When the House convened on the following morning to close the session, Colonel McIntosh, one of the members, was observed reading with interest a yellow document that looked like another telegram.

He rose and explained that it had just been handed to him, and was a copy of another telegram from Mr. Elliott that had been sent to the Premier, and with the permission of the House he would read it. It proved to be a direct personal attack on John.

It accused him of breaking his pledges and of having been implicated in the affairs that had led to the resignation of the former Attorney-General.

It went further, and declared that recently while travelling in the northern part of the province the Premier had selected certain lands for himself to be delivered to him at a nominal price, and so was taking advantage of his position to keep a large area out of the plan of soldier settlement.

As was John's manner his wrath of the former night had subsided, and while this was a more personal attack than the other he

appeared to receive it rather wearily. He did, however, declare that since he had not yet received this telegram himself and copies were being given to other people it looked as if there were "a sinister plot afoot."

Colonel McIntosh said he knew nothing more about it than the telegram as read had been handed to him, and it did not follow that he believed a word of it.

John put through the Dolly Varden Bill and the House prorogued.

It was directly after this that I entered his office as private secretary. He was still angry about Elliott's charges, and told me all about the land matter.

All that had happened was that, while travelling in the François Lake district, he had seen a fine piece of land which he thought he would like to get for his son, who was thinking of going north to farm. He took an option on it accordingly, and wrote his son about it, but he had changed his mind and did not wish to go north, and as the Premier had not bought for speculation he turned it over to the Land Settlement Board to sell to actual settlers. And that was all. He was nettled by any accusation so at variance with his sobriquet of Honest John, and said he would make Elliott answer for it before the courts.

His colleagues and friends tried to dissuade him, saying that no one took the matter seriously and the charges could best be answered from the platform. But John was stubborn as usual :

"I'm not going to eat dirt," he declared emphatically, and went on with his case.

His colleagues had diagnosed the case correctly. John sued for \$50,000 and was awarded twenty-five cents, which apparently meant that while the jury did not consider him guilty of any dishonesty they thought the matter not worth bringing to court.

John said he was satisfied. The verdict was a vindication of his character, which was the chief concern.

SCENE 42. ALFALFA AND TEA

ONE other tactical error John made about that time, but it was nearly forgotten in the publicity of the libel suit. George Hanes, member for North Vancouver, was a civil engineer. Though elected as a Liberal he severely criticized some aspects of John's settlement of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway affair. He was courageous and persistent with the one idea. As fast as John pointed out that one of his motions was out of order he was up with another, and when that was voted down he was ready with a third. Like a bulldog snapping at John's legs and heedless of the stick that would beat him back he annoyed him exceedingly.

John said he was tired of having the time of the House taken up in that way, but would debate the matter with Hanes on the public platform in his own constituency.

The challenge was promptly accepted, and John went over to North Vancouver on a week-end, his Falstaffian girth shaking with merriment at the prospect of public combat. It did not prove to be the comedy he had expected. A crowded audience of Hanes's friends greeted him.

"Give him some alfalfa, George," shouted one of them as if John were a mule in need of a feed.

When John rose he was nettled by the heckling and innuendoes of some crooked, hidden dealing.

"I have earned my bread by the sweat of my brow," he declared, "and I say he has a foul and crooked mind and a devil in his heart when he suggests that I have profited by these things."

This heated diagnosis of demoniacal possession was not taken very seriously; but the attack aroused public sympathy for Hanes, and in the following election he was returned as an Independent with the biggest majority of any candidate in the province. He showed no rancour, became personally friendly with John again, and was almost as often found voting for him as against him.

In spite of all this John finished his first term as Premier strong in the esteem of the electorate. He was naturally averse to social legislation unless it appealed strongly to his generous instincts, yet his Premiership was remarkable for the number of humani-

tarian laws enacted. Bills were passed providing for the care of neglected infants, regulation of the hours of labour, and the prevention of child labour in factories and workshops.

A Department of Labour was established with free employment offices ; a minimum wage for working women was put in force. To crown all, in the closing session a Mothers' Pensions Act was passed to provide destitute widows, or other mothers, with a monthly allowance for the support of their infant children.

Speaking of these matters in the House John admitted their need, but pointed out that they would incur increased taxation, and that those who demanded such measures must not complain if they were called upon to pay for them. The Mothers' Pensions Act was piloted through the House by the Hon. Dr. MacLean, Provincial Secretary, but its warmest sponsor was, quite naturally, Mrs. Smith, the only woman member. Her speech on the Bill, I think, touched John's feelings not a little.

The night the Bill passed, Mrs. Smith, with a touch of feminine diplomacy, invited him to tea with a number of ladies from different parts of the Province, who had gathered in Victoria to give their personal support to the Act. When the meal was over, John, soothed with tea and good eatables, sat back at the head of the table, a benign, white-headed figure, with hands folded serenely on his ample vest, and looking over them benevolently he mused aloud :

" When I think of the thousands of poor mothers who have gone into eternity in the struggle to keep themselves and their children alive, I can't help thinking how much easier their lot would have been had they had something like this to help them."

And the good ladies, many of them politically opposed to John, looked up at him and murmured to each other, " Isn't he an old dear? "

SCENE 43. JOHN TRIUMPHANT

IN the election of 1920, that immediately followed, John conducted a remarkable campaign. He sat up nearly all one night, and with the stub of a pencil wrote a manifesto to the electors emphasizing all the good things the Government had done and was going to do, and appealing to the people to "work together to make British Columbia a good place to live in." Bowser described it as "a million words about nothing," but it evidently had some effect.

He travelled as far as to the Peace River district, up in the very north-east section of the province. By a striking coincidence Bowser, who was on a similar mission, travelled with him on the same train from Edmonton. I do not know whether they had any personal conversation, but I know that a few days later a telegram came to the office reading something like this :

"POUCE COUPE, B.C.

"Having a great time. Had a red-hot meeting here with Bowser last night and public feeling overwhelmingly with the Government.

"JOHN OLIVER."

Mr. Bowser's version of that meeting I never heard, but there was one little incident in connection with that trip in which he scored. On the motor ride from the railhead John had occasion to stay for supper at a log road-house kept by a Mrs. Brainerd. After the meal he volunteered to help the hostess wash the dishes, and in wiping a jug let it fall and break into fragments. It was of a particular pattern that Mrs. Brainerd had brought from Ontario and highly prized. John apologized, and was sadly crestfallen, and she said little about it.

Two hours later along came Mr. Bowser and party. Mrs. Brainerd apologized for the milk jug on the table, as her other one had been broken.

Mr. Bowser : How did it happen ?

Mrs. Brainerd : Premier John Oliver let it fall.

Mr. Bowser : On the table ?

Mrs. Brainerd : No. He was drying the dishes, but I know it was just an accident, and I am sure he felt very sorry.

Mr. Bowser : Just like him ! He was always clumsy. Did he offer to pay you ?

Mrs. Brainerd : No.

Mr. Bowser : Just like a Liberal. Well, if he won't pay for it, I will."

Two weeks later a package arrived from Edmonton containing a jug almost identical in shape and pattern with the one broken, and a card attached to its handle read :

" This is to replace the jug Oliver broke. If you would keep it intact put it beyond the reach of the hands of all Liberals."

John may have broken the jug, but he certainly kept his party together. He led them throughout that campaign like a skilful and fearless general at the head of his forces, and in a period when all the other war Governments of Canada had fallen or were falling, his was returned with a substantial majority. He was left in command of a House that contained 26 Liberals, 15 Conservatives, and 7 Independents, and of the last the majority were considered as favourable to the Government.

For John it was a great personal triumph. He had stumped the province from end to end. He was at the height of his prestige and popularity, and was everywhere warmly received. Even when in the warmth of his enthusiasm he openly kissed a lady candidate on the public platform, it was only regarded as a token of his very human and sympathetic nature. He was nominated both in Victoria and his old constituency of Delta, and was elected by large majorities in both. The aristocratic capital city that had once rejected him as " a haysced " was now glad to honour him as the leading statesman of the province, while his old home district turned its back on his former victor, Frank MacKenzie, and took him to its bosom again. He elected to sit for Victoria, and relinquished Delta to his old friend A. D. Paterson, who, after a warm campaign, was returned by a substantial vote.

All John's Cabinet Ministers were re-elected, and he was showered with congratulations, but it did not shake his equanim-

ity. He thought more of those who had been defeated, and wrote to each one sympathizing with them and thanking them for their support.

On the Opposition side his old opponent Bowser was the sole Conservative elected for Vancouver. If not victorious, his following was nearly doubled, and if the next election showed the same proportionate gain they would again be in power, so he continued the fight with all his accustomed spirit.

One bone of contention in the former House had been the enactment of the Prohibition Law. It had proved difficult and unsatisfactory, and about the time of the 1920 election, on a referendum vote of the people, it was rejected in favour of the sale of liquor under Government control.

Bowser, discussing this question, had said that he was neither wet nor dry, but wanted to see the law impartially enforced.

"Yes," retorted John, "he is like the church of which the apostle wrote, 'You are neither hot nor cold, and I could spew you out of my mouth.'"

John, though lacking in literary knowledge, had remarkable aptitude in Scriptural comparisons.

Bowser had been criticizing the ineffectiveness of the Government's timber policy, in which donkey engines, logging camps, and sawmills played a great part.

"He should get a donkey engine and drag the timber out of his own eye before he attempts to extract a splinter from the eye of the Government," remarked John.

SCENE 44. EXAMPLE IN ECONOMY

JOHN OLIVER's victory and popularity had no unsettling effect upon him, and his home life continued the same as before. He had purchased a six-roomed bungalow, set in a good-sized garden and lawn in a quiet street, and here the family followed the simple life. By this time the boys were all away, the eldest daughter was married, the second was teaching in school, and only the youngest, Mildred, remained at home. They hired occasional help, but kept no servants.

"I guess," remarked John to a colleague one day, "I'm about the only Premier whose wife does her own washing."

It must not be inferred from this that John was a domestic slave-driver. Mrs. Oliver, like her husband, preferred to do her own work. The habit of self-help had become so ingrained in them during those years on the farm that neither cared to delegate to anyone else the tasks they could do themselves, nor is it likely that in these days of mechanical equipment the home washing meant any great hardship. Mrs. Oliver, I imagine, was much happier around the house in dust-cap and apron, than sitting at a State banquet among the grandees of the land as, from her position, she was occasionally compelled to do.

She was amused one day when a man who had been hired to do a few chores around the place got into intimate conversation with her as she stood in her housework attire on the steps. The man told her his family history and wound up with the question :

"And what does your man do ? "

"Oh, he's Premier of the province."

"What !" ejaculated the man. "Oh, I beg your pardon, but I'd never have thought it."

With this dubious compliment the conversation closed, Mrs. Oliver setting him at ease with an assurance that it was all right.

John was often, with some show of reason, accused of parsimony inconsistent with his position ; but he regarded it as an example in economy and thrift, and when all things are considered it would have been surprising had it been otherwise. When a man's money is the crystallized sweat of his brow, when his silver is his fat congealed and his gold the transmuted flesh of his bones—to take these from him is like tearing the nails from the fingers or the hairs from the head. They are the tokens of long years of hardship and toil, and have become an incorporeal part of his mental and physical being.

Certainly John practised economy. When he went to Vancouver he passed the palatial C.P.R. hotel and put up at a less costly hostel in a side street. I remember that on one occasion I went over with him to take up some matters with a P.G.E. Railway official. When we had finished it was time for lunch. Where to go ? was the question.

"Follow me," said John. "We'll find a place."

And in baggy grey suit and straw hat he led the way straight to a White Lunch restaurant in the busiest part of the city. It was thronged with people for the midday meal, but John, heedless of their stares, ploughed his way through them like a grey, Atlantic freighter, the official and myself following like tugs in his wake.

We grabbed our food from the counter, and sat down with the Premier, who was the centre of observation.

"Do you see that old fellow over there?" remarked the official. "He's been staring at you for the last five minutes."

John laughed in his hearty way. "Let him if it does him any good. While he's getting his fill of staring, I'm getting mine of something else."

He certainly did. In fact, it was his misfortune, as it is that of many men suddenly transformed from an active outdoor to a sedentary life, that he had cultivated an appetite that was difficult to restrict to the smaller needs of his present position. He had by this time grown to a barrel-like rotundity, and weighed about 225 pounds. His stoutness made him appear shorter than he actually was. He would breathe heavily after slight exertion, but otherwise his physical strength did not seem to be impaired, and I had not yet known him to miss coming to the office for a single day because of sickness. Stuffy with cold or limping from sciatica he would be there all the same, and work away till the infirmity had passed.

In his office he maintained the same plainness as in his domestic life. Other ministers might have electric clocks, but when he wanted a timepiece he bought a nickel-plated alarum clock at his own expense, and had the janitor hang it from a hook in the wall where it would always catch his eye.

He was a tireless worker, often in his office at eight in the morning and seldom leaving before six at night. Then he would take with him a bundle of papers and letters, and over these he would pore in his study at home. Mentally, if not physically, the farmer had become submerged in the politician, and his work entered into his drink and food and sleep. As a master he was generally reasonable, though subject to moments of explosive irritation.

After one of these outbursts he was usually very gentle on the following day, and would place his hand on your shoulder and talk in a confidential way.

He was always well up with his work. He had many callers, and seldom did I find it necessary to turn anyone away—he was willing to see them all, but would not allow them to waste too much of his time. He had a heavy correspondence, but knew at once what to reply, and with the help of a highly efficient stenographer (Miss Gray, who was with him through the last seven years of his administration) he kept his baskets clear. His worst fault, from our standpoint, was that in his desire to set an example of economy in government, he kept the pay of his office staff below that of other ministers in positions subordinate to himself. But he had requested the others to economize, and regarded himself as the leader who should set the example. The others thought his policy penny wise and pound foolish, and refused to follow.

Like many farmers, John, though close with his money, was the soul of hospitality. On the farm there is usually a prodigality of meat and flour, butter and eggs, and the true farmer loves to dispense them bountifully, but the dollars they bring are all too few and must be carefully guarded to serve their turn. John had entered politics rather late in life and the farm habits clung to him. He liked to have people to talk to, and visitors were always welcome to his table and his house. During the legislative sessions he would invite members of all parties to his home for dinner, taking them in mixed batches, and his stout form and ruddy face at the head of the table, backed by his laughter-loving geniality, made him an excellent host.

SCENE 45. THE UNEMPLOYED

JOHN's hour of triumph in the election of 1920 was followed by the inevitable sag. All the artificial stimulants of war prosperity had to be laid aside. The munition factories turned to the manufacture of blasting powder on a smaller scale, and the Pacific coast wartime shipyards, unable to compete with Glasgow and

Newcastle in the years of peace, closed down. The soldiers had spent their bounties, and the winter of 1921-2 saw thousands of unemployed on the streets.

At such times appeals to the Government are inevitable, for there is a fiction in the public mind that the Government in some mysterious way is the guardian of a mine of inexhaustible wealth. John tried in vain to instruct them otherwise.

"It is not the business of the Government to maintain the people," he told one delegation sharply. "It is the business of the people to maintain the Government."

Prices of farm produce were falling, and there were complaints from those who had bought land at high prices, with Government assistance, that unless they received further help they must abandon their farms.

"If some of these fellows," wrote John to a friend, "were as assiduous in cultivating their land as they are in cultivating their grievances we should have very little trouble with them. I am getting sick and tired of these complaints. The more you do for these men the more they want you to do."

So far as the unemployed were concerned John could never quite rid his mind of the idea that many—though by no means all of them—were in a sad condition as a result of their own lack of shift and thrift, and he confessed that his sympathy was rather with the hard-working and producing taxpayer than with those who claimed much and gave nothing in return.

Still, the problem of unemployment was general throughout the Dominion, and something had to be done. Many men with families were really hard up through no fault of their own. These cases were worthy of sympathy, and this genuine element gave strength to the cry for help.

One day, when the Legislature was sitting in midwinter, the unemployed came down to the Parliament Buildings in an organized procession. They meant to give the legislators visible evidence of the numbers in want and came in hundreds. In order that the men sitting in the Legislative Chamber might see them, they crowded the guards aside, and pushed through the lobbies past the glass panelled doors of the assembly hall.

John, ready to bear the brunt of the battle, rose from his seat,

and pushing through the door met them head on in the lobby and standing squarely before them halted the procession.

"It is of no use you men coming here like this," he told them. "You can't talk business in this way, but if you will appoint a committee of not more than five or six, I will meet them in my office at ten o'clock to-morrow morning and we will see what can be done."

Some of the leaders agreed that this seemed reasonable and the crowd left.

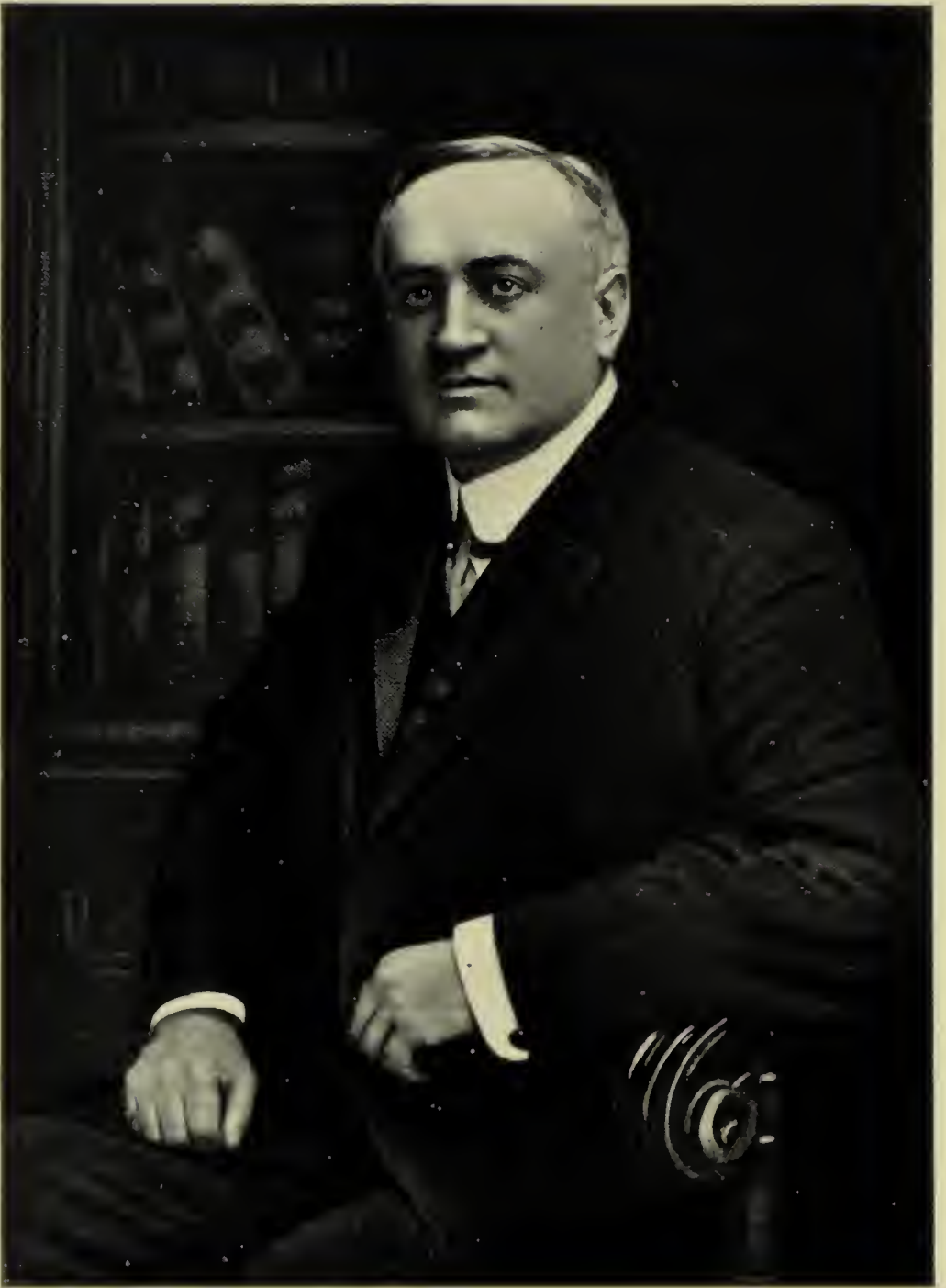
The next morning the committee came, but not alone. They brought with them a horde of supporters who crowded into my office, which served as ante-chamber to the Premier's room. I went in and told John, who asked me to call such other Cabinet Ministers as might be got and also the Deputy Minister of Labour, Mr. McNiven. I went out and asked them to name their committee, whom I admitted after calling up the other Ministers, but the trouble began when I was closing the door on the last of the committee to enter the Premier's presence. The crowd in my office consisted both of men and women, and they demanded to be admitted to present their grievances. I told them that I had instructions to admit the committee only, and placed my back against the baize-covered door that was one of two admitting to the presence.

The men pounced on me, verbally demanding what right I had to refuse them, and by inference denouncing me as the minion of an oppressive Government ; but two of the women came nobly to my rescue.

"This poor man can't help it," remarked one of them. "He's only obeying orders. Leave him alone."

This drew them off, and I was able to resume my seat at the desk, where I engaged in friendly conversation with my rescuers.

In the meantime the men clustered together and in anarchistic spirit denounced Governments as instruments of capitalistic oppression, and the Oliver Government in particular. Just then, Mr. Pattullo, the Minister of Lands, entered on his way to the premier's office, and they pounced upon him. His well-dressed figure was the very antithesis of theirs, and they demanded to know what he meant by trying to bring in more immigrants when



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there were already so many out of work, and whether it was right that members of the Legislature and Cabinet Ministers should be raising their own pay when other people were starving. One lady told him what she would do to him if only she were a man. He stoutly reminded her that there were plenty of men in the room, and proceeded to reason with them. By the soft answer he mollified their wrath and went his way unmolested into the Premier's room.

From that office, even through the double doors and above the hum of conversation around me, I heard the Premier's voice raised with others in loud altercation. Evidently he was having his trouble in convincing the committee of the gulf that lay between their insistent demands for immediate relief and the limitations of a Government handling the taxpayers' money and hedged about with statutory restrictions.

One of the delegates disappeared through the side door of the office leading directly into the corridor, and I afterwards learned that the Premier escorted him to the exit. Soon afterwards the doors leading into my office were swung sharply open by a lady delegate who as she left very audibly told the Premier to "go back and dig ditches." She went straight out through the office, the other delegates following, while my lady friends waited for a minute to express their regret and then followed with the rest.

In spite of this stormy conference John allowed no personal rancour to deter him from doing what he could to meet a difficult situation. Finally, a plan was evolved by which the Dominion, the Province, and the municipalities shared equally in the cost of relief. In Vancouver the provincial Government set men to work in clearing the University site at Point Grey and road construction was pushed all over the province. By these measures the situation was tided over until normal conditions returned.

But it was not the end of the matter for John. Three years later came another depression, when the unemployed crowded the galleries of the Legislature and interrupted proceedings with cries of "Give us jobs."

The Labour members moved a resolution to the effect that a first charge on all industries should be the maintenance of the

unemployed. John interpreted this as a motion of censure on the Government and stoutly opposed it.

"The trouble is," he declared, "that too many people are turning from natural to artificial industries. There are men in the Delta who have their wives going out to help them with the milking and other farm work, and because they cannot hire the help farmers cannot get the ditches dug to drain their land."

He told of one man who came to his own door on the farm one morning asking for something to eat. He was offered food if he would go out to the field and help to save the crop. He refused, saying that was not his work, as he was a machinist.

"I told him that if he could not work he could not eat, that I had earned my bread at farming, and if it was good enough for me it was good enough for him to earn something to eat, or he could go hungry.

"Men crowd into the cities—that is a matter of choice—but how many will go upon the soil and make it productive? Even if the Government will grubstake a man, how many will go? There are the attractions of the city, the bright lights, the wood already cut, the pavements, and all the conveniences. The people to-day will not go through what the pioneers went through.

"If it is the duty of the Government to provide work, there should be a corresponding power in the Government to be able to say to the machinist, 'There is no work for you as a machinist, but there is work some place else at something else.' Would this work? Can we tell the man earning his living on the typewriter, or he of the tweeds and broadcloth, the kid gloves and soft white hands, that there is no work for him, but he may labour elsewhere? Would they go into the ditch and work? I say to the Labour members of this House and those asking redress, Are you prepared to do this? I want to know.

"Let us go further. Take two men starting out in life equal. One works hard, saves his money and puts away something for a rainy day. The other spends as he goes, indulging himself in picture shows, dancing, races, and the like. Hard times come. Are you going to tax the industrious man for his self-denial and take away from him to provide for the man who has squandered his all?"

He concluded by admitting that there were cases of real need, and there must be a middle course of dealing with the question so that no one would need to be without the necessities of life.

His attacks on the shiftless among the unemployed were not likely to increase his popularity, but as he said about this time :

“ I am getting old enough to stand here and speak the truth as I see it, and it is a matter of indifference to me whether you like it or not. Knowing that I have given the people of this province many years of faithful service I dare now speak fearlessly what is in my mind.”

SCENE 46. IN TROUBLED WATERS

IN times of industrial depression Governments sail in troubled waters. So the Oliver Government found in the post-war collapse of 1921. Ordinary troubles were accentuated by other circumstances. At the close of the first session following the election of 1920, members of both parties in the Legislature signed a round robin petitioning for about a 50 per cent. increase in their indemnities, and a substantial rise in the pay of Cabinet Ministers.

John opposed the movement as inopportune at such a time, and it was said that he threatened to resign his position rather than yield. At last a compromise was agreed upon, and an increase of indemnities was granted on about half the scale that had been petitioned for. The public did not know about John's fight, but they did know that the indemnities of members had been increased from \$1,600 to \$2,000 a year, and the salaries of Cabinet Ministers raised from \$6,000 to \$7,500, the Premier's being lifted, in the same proportion, from \$7,500 to \$9,000.

A storm of muttered indignation followed, and John received some anonymous and threatening letters, one or two couched in vile language. He announced through the Press that he had instructed his secretary to cast any further communications of the kind into the waste-paper basket without bringing them to his attention, and this correspondence soon ceased.

The Government's position was made worse by the fact that a

statutory increase in salaries expected by the civil servants at this time had been withheld on the plea that stringent economy was necessary. Again the inconsistency of such action with that of increases for ministers and members was commented upon, and it was asked why John Oliver could deny such an advantage to others when he took it himself.

In fact, John was in a difficult position at this time. Although he had opposed the increase, had he refused to accept it the action would have been regarded as a reflection on all his colleagues in the Government, and would probably have led to disruption and disaster. I think he reasoned within himself that it was better that he should compromise for the sake of harmony than relinquish his position to someone else when a firm hand was needed on the tiller. To John himself, the consequence of these actions on his position as a member for the city of Victoria, where the civil service vote was so mighty a factor, was to bear bitter fruit. I heard him say to one of his ministers a few years afterwards : " I told you at the time it was a mistake and we should have reason to regret it."

Bowser had personally opposed the increase, but since Conservative members generally had been party to the action there was no platform criticism, and the party papers were in the same position ; but there was that more dangerous discontent that works in cellars and manufactures bombs in the form of hostile ballots. Though the Government was held chiefly responsible, the Opposition was not exempt, and the seed of a third party movement was sown.

To John it was an unpleasant experience. One of his colleagues once told me :

" He had a high sense of honour in public life and any necessity for compromise always jarred him."

One could well believe this, for in all his personal dealings he was punctiliously honest to the payment of the uttermost farthing. This was noticeable in his distinction between personal and official expenses. He always carried with him a number of postage and bank stamps. The former went on his personal letters and the latter on his personal cheques, though sometimes these had to be paid out as a consequence of the office he held.

It was about this time too that the province, following a referendum vote, changed over from prohibition of the liquor traffic to sale under Government control. In the midst of a period of unemployment it brought forth a host of applications for positions in liquor stores or in connection with the traffic. For about 600 services some 6,000 applications were received. Many of these came to John as Premier, but they were all referred to the Attorney-General, under whose administration the liquor sales were to come.

There were appeals for positions on the Liquor Board, in the warehouses and stores, and one gentleman suggested that since he was a good wrestler he should be appointed the official "bouncer," for the removal of objectionable customers from the stores. As so many were calling and but few could be chosen, this, again, created soreness among the rejected.

Indeed, applications for employment generally were among John's principal annoyances. They came from all over the world. An envelope stamped with pictures of Egyptian camel drivers contained a letter from a man in Khartoum seeking work as a Government engineer. A retiring officer wrote from India saying he wished to settle in British Columbia, but would like some Government position to cke out his pension to a living standard. A news item announcing that some official was retiring or had died invariably brought a letter from some watchful applicant. Ambitious fathers and loving mothers wrote asking for openings for their children. Unskilled labourers asked for jobs on roads and public works, and some threatened disaster to the Government if their demands were not met.

To the threatening letters John would reply directly and defiantly, telling them to do their worst. With the host of job hunters generally he sometimes became impatient :

"Write and tell him," he would say, "that I'm not running an employment office."

John was sometimes charged with being too brusque in such matters, but there is no doubt that his method saved him a great deal of valuable time.

It was in the second year of his Premiership that he had to receive the Prince of Wales on his first official visit to Victoria.

He used to recall with amusement one incident that showed how familiarly he was regarded by the common people. The Prince was called upon to lay the foundation-stone for the statue of his great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, that stands in the Parliament Buildings grounds. John, who was with him, was moving around when his great bulk came in front of the slender figure of the Prince like the sun eclipsing the moon.

"Hey, John!" yelled someone from the crowd. "Get out of the light there. We want to see the Prince, not you." And John smilingly stepped aside.

John conceived a real liking for the Prince, and discussing the question of monarchy one day, he showed that his views had changed since he read *Reynolds's Newspaper* in England as a boy.

"I think it's the best system for the British Empire," he observed, "and when you come to count the cost of a presidential election, I don't know that it is any more expensive." He never lost sight of the cash end of the business.

Among John's other duties was that of receiving callers from all places. In one year I marked down over 600 interviews in the office alone, and when Sundays, sittings of the House, and frequent absences from the city are subtracted, this will be found to work out at a high daily average. As samples of the more distinguished visitors from abroad there were in the number: from Great Britain—Neville Chamberlain, M.P., and Sir Julian Orde; from the United States—Governor Oleott, of Oregon; from Hawaii—Alexander Hume Ford; from Australia—Sir Henry and Lady Barwell; from New Zealand—Premier Massey; and from India—Mr. Sastri. And John Oliver, the pit boy and bush farmer, received them all with an old-fashioned courtesy that invariably left a pleasant impression.

SCENE 47. WAYSIDE DEEDS

JOHN was a queer mixture of the philosopher and the emotion-alist, of the sentimentalist and hard-headed business man. In driving a bargain he was cool and hard as a doornail, but when his pity was touched he gave generously.

I remember one poor, helpless old man, who came to the office seeking help on a day when the Premier was too busy to see him. After sitting for an hour or more he went away. When John came down to the office the next morning, he said :

“ That old fellow you had in here yesterday followed me to the house last night. I didn’t know of anything I could do for a man of his type, but he seemed such a pitiful case that I just gave him twenty dollars to help him along.”

On another occasion a boy stood on the steps of the Parliament Buildings, selling newspapers to the civil servants as they were leaving for the day. He was oddly attired in a khaki coat, an ill-fitting pair of trousers of different texture, and a forage cap on his head. He looked like the Artful Dodger drifted west. One of the officials asked him where he had got his clothes, and he told his story. He had been working on a farm in the Fraser Valley, but with youthful desire for adventure had struck out on his travels to land in Victoria “ dead broke.” He confessed that he would be very glad if he could get back to work in the Fraser Valley again.

At this time the Premier came out, and the official called his attention to the boy. Always interested in youngsters he questioned him, and from his knowledge of the Fraser Valley was convinced that the lad was telling the truth. He started to write something on a pad, and then, as if suddenly changing his mind, turned again to the boy.

“ Here. Follow me and jump into this car.”

The astonished boy followed, and John drove him to his home. Mrs. Oliver attended to him with motherly sympathy, and they kept him there for the night. On the following day John had to go over to Vancouver, and took the boy with him. He had telegraphed his son on the Delta farm, and he met them in Vancouver. He hired the lad and took him out to work on the farm. What happened to him after that I do not know, but at least it showed that John was willing to give him a chance.

I know that he dispensed many little wayside charities like these of which the public never knew.

In his emotional ups and downs there were times when the burdens of his office lay heavily upon him. About the time of the

Elliott libel suit a number of other petty worries were annoying him, and one day he remarked :

“ I feel sometimes like taking my hat and coat and walking out of this office for good.”

But these were only momentary. As he frankly stated at other times, he “ liked his job ” and rather enjoyed the fights that went with it.

An aged widow named Stultz had an only son killed in the war. With her husband she had been homesteading in the wilds of Cariboo. The husband died, and the widow, at the age of seventy, tried to keep the place going, but the loneliness and hardship of the life were too great for her, and she left her cabin in the wilderness to live with a sister in Spokane. Her husband had made no will, and as there were no blood relatives to inherit, the law required that half the property should revert to the Crown.

Mrs. Stultz wrote the Premier asking if she could not be given title to the whole of the property. He looked into the case and lost no time in putting through an Order in Council vesting full title in the widow. She wrote him a letter in the tremulous hand of age, the spelling and grammar showing that its composition was no light task, and concluded :

“ When you were elected they called you Honest John which I have proved.”

John was the particular target of religious enthusiasts, but he seldom if ever read their letters. He would glance at one and say, “ I guess we won't trouble to answer that.”

Some of these letters were loaded up with Scriptural quotations marked “ c. 1, v. 2 ” and so on until they looked like a problem in arithmetic. Most of the writers were evidently sincere in their efforts to impress upon the head of the Government the correctness of their interpretation, and most touching were the expounders of prophecy. The Books of Daniel and Revelation were their favoured oracles. They were anxious to convince the Premier that the moral condition of the country was such that the Dark Ages would shine as the perfect day beside it, and they forecasted imminent disaster if he and his Government did not mend their ways. “ Blood,” “ smoke,” “ fire,” and “ great darkness ” were among their favourite terms. One wrote that, as a result of

ill treatment by Government employees, he was surrounded day and night by a circle of evil spirits. Another said that his cattle were bewitched and were giving blood for milk, incidentally inferring that this was the fault of the Government too. Another had seen signs and wonders in heaven and earth, and found evidence of the Second Coming in a thunderstorm that had broken over his head. He bade the rulers of the world take heed.

Missives of this kind were usually dropped to sleep on a pillow of discarded envelopes in the waste-paper basket. Most of the letters received, however, were sensible in tone, and were either answered directly or referred to the Minister of the Department to which they properly belonged.

Calls upon the Premier to open institutions, fairs, and sports, and preside at different assemblies were numerous, and many, if not most of them, were courteously declined. He did not like to be drawn away from the business of his office. One of the complaints of his party was that he did not get out among the people sufficiently. He held that the business he had in hand was more important, and the calls often did not justify the travelling expenses that were involved. To do him justice he kept down expenses when he did move with a rigidity that would have delighted the heart of Joseph Stalin. I have known him take a bottom berth on a journey to Ottawa, where a subordinate minister or official would certainly have ordered a compartment or drawing-room. One of his colleagues told me he thought this was foolish, that the Premier could have worked better in privacy, and in any event he would get no thanks for it. So indeed it proved. John's economy was rather blamed than appreciated, but he conscientiously believed he was saving money for the province and setting a good example to others.

In his office he never discriminated between rich and poor. The man in overalls received as ready admission as the tourist in the tailored London suit. In fact, I think if he had shown any preference it would have been for the former, since he had never lost his affinity with those who earned their daily bread by the toil of their hands. Rightly or wrongly I always thought that subconsciously he had a certain amount of contempt for soft-handed workers. It came out sometimes in his speeches. Attacked one

day in the House for the failure of the Government to increase the salaries of civil servants he replied :

“The best evidence that the civil servants are not underpaid or the service suffering is that there is always a line of applicants for every vacancy. They are all eager to work for the Government—there are always plenty for the white-collar jobs.”

When he saw a six-footer, built in proportion, spending his days bent over a desk, I could fancy him apostrophizing :

“Here is a province where there are farms to be hewn from the forests and mines to be blasted from the rocks. You should be in a manlier occupation. Instead, you prefer to shirk the hardship, and spend your youth and strength doing a woman’s work in the sheltered life of cities. Your brain would be better used in directing, and your muscles in using the plough, the axe, or the drill, but you waste your giant’s strength on a pen.”

His sympathy with the manual workers was always evident. There lived in Victoria a Mrs. Cassidy who walked through life in obscure and humble paths. She was of Belgian parentage, and during the war emerged as a tireless worker for the Allies. Wherever there was work to be done—in knitting, in sewing, in preparing presents for the men at the Front, or in selling flowers in the street, Mrs. Cassidy was there ; but when the rewards and distinctions came to be distributed Mrs. Cassidy was not there. As often happens in such cases, she was passed over for those of higher social standing who had not worked half as unselfishly. She felt this slight and spoke to the Premier one day about it. He sympathized with her most warmly, but pointed out that as it was a matter for a foreign Government, he could do nothing about it.

“Never mind, Mrs. Cassidy,” he said, placing his hand kindly on her shoulder, “the good Lord knows what you have done, and He will reward you.”

And I think Mrs. Cassidy went away comforted.

SCENE 48. SAYINGS OF HONEST JOHN

JOHN has graduated from the philosopher in overalls to the white-bearded sage sitting in a spacious office overlooking lawns and gardens bedecked with stately monuments. Here, seated back in his chair, with spectacles on nose and thumbs in vest, he gives some conclusions from his habit of thinking out things for himself :

Party Loyalty.—The first duty of a public man is to consider the welfare of the people he represents. If he is a party man his next duty will be to work faithfully in the interests of his party, and in so doing he will be working both in the interests of his party and of the country. But he must never forget that the permanent strength of any party must rest on the firm basis that its policy and administration is superior to that of any other party offering its services to the people.

Party Patronage.—I have found from experience that there is a tendency among some individuals to claim preference for party services. These requests cannot, and should not, be acceded to beyond the point where, other things being equal, the preference would naturally be given to a political friend rather than to an opponent. This preference should never go to the extent where it would impose a burden upon the Government or upon the people.

Effect of War.—We must not lose sight of the fact that the cost of the World War has not yet been paid, and will be a burden upon the people for generations yet to come ; but in a province like British Columbia and a country like Canada, so richly endowed with all the necessities of life, there is no reason why these burdens should be so heavy that people cannot, by a reasonable amount of industry and intelligence, obtain for themselves and their families a comfortable existence.

Greed and War (In the war years).—I firmly believe that the terrible conditions now existing in the world are directly caused by man's greed—greed condensed into the life of the individual, compressed into the life of the nation, and now exploding with such terrific effect. Surely, unless we as a nation set our minds with a strong determination that we will, as far as within us lies,

put an end to this wrongdoing, we are not in a position to seek God's face.

Individuals and Government.—The principles upon which government is founded are very similar to those applied to the daily life of a good, honest and efficient citizen. To the vast majority of men comes the desire to improve their condition in life. There are many objects they would like to attain, but the ability to do so is limited by the conditions by which they are surrounded. It is exactly the same with government, and this is particularly true in a new country like British Columbia.

Borrowing.—The Government, like the individual, is warranted in borrowing money for improvements, conditioned :

First, that the money is well expended.

Second, that it is expended on work of a reproductive nature.

Third, that the reproductive part shall not be deferred to such an extent that the carrying charges have a crippling effect either upon the individual or upon the Government.

Education (To the students of King Edward High School, Vancouver).—Life in itself is an educational process, and school training, if effective, enlarges and develops the powers of the mind to think more clearly, to appreciate values more correctly, and to get understanding both from the spoken and the written word. The life of every person is tested by his influence on the country in which he resides. As a stone thrown into a pool ripples the entire surface, so each of you will have an influence in your private life, in your occupations, in your attitude towards the functions of government, and in every capacity. The status of any country is limited by the average status of its inhabitants. Life is not measured by years, by wealth or power or place, but by its results for good or evil.

National Duty (Thoughts on Trafalgar Day).—There is one asset more important to the province than all the rest—the human asset. No nation has attained permanence, whatever its material wealth, unless inhabited by citizens of a superior type. To my mind there are four traits necessary to the upbuilding of a sound national character. They are : intelligence, industry, thrift, and adaptability to conditions. There is no royal road to success. This morning we celebrated Trafalgar Day. The

signal which Nelson flashed to his fleet has come down to us unimpaired through the years, and to-day there is the same imperative necessity that every one of us should perform his duty to British Columbia, to Canada, and the Empire as was done in that great battle of Trafalgar.

Duty of Government.—I sometimes think there is a mistaken idea in the minds of the public that the Government is elected to sustain the people. Instead of that the Government is elected to be sustained by the people. It is the duty of the Government to transact the business of the people—the business which they cannot transact for themselves as individuals. It is not the duty of the Government to feed and clothe the people.

A Personal Note.—I have always tried to do the best I could under the conditions with which I was surrounded. No man is a dollar the poorer because I have provided a competency for my old age and because I have attained the position of Premier of this province. The Almighty endowed me with a desire to know why. Whatever my hand found to do I have tried to do to the best of my ability all my life, and I have tried to find out the reason for things.

Oliverisms (Condensed from larger utterances or caught on the wing).—Think before you work. Don't work first and think afterwards.

It is not the business of the Government to maintain the people—it is the business of the people to maintain the Government.

The hog that gets fat first is usually killed first. Try that on the party heelers.

If you would meet your debts you must doff the broadcloth and don the overalls.

There are times when it requires more courage to stand still than to go forward.

It's a fine thing to have your head in the air, but it's best to keep your feet on the ground.

From my experience of courts there are times when I'd rather trust to a good club in my bare fists.

In the past honours have often been bestowed where they were not deserved ; in the future I venture to say they will be given in recognition of services to mankind.

Make up your mind and act. You'll probably be right, and if

you're wrong you'll soon find out your mistake and won't be likely to repeat it.

Somebody once told me that if I aimed at the sky I might at least hit a tree. If I wanted to hit a tree I'd shoot straight at it.

The man on top of the stack has the widest view, but he gets all the wind and the flying ants.

No man is a whit bigger than his soul, whether digging a ditch in overalls or addressing the Legislature in a tailored suit. I've done both and I know.

SCENE 49. THE FREIGHT RATES CAMPAIGN

"THOSE are John Oliver's monuments !"

This remark of an enthusiastic admirer referred to those huge grey elevators with colonnaded sides that stand like castles of commerce along the Vancouver waterfront. The statement smacked, perhaps, of the spirit of hero worship which gives to the general all the credit for winning the war. It omitted one salient fact—that the first of these monuments was due in large measure to the energy and foresight of the Hon. H. H. Stevens, who had induced the Dominion Government to place it there at a time when there seemed to be little encouragement for its construction.

The admirer's remark was based on John's freight rates campaign, which had been followed by a great flow of wheat through the port of Vancouver. He had been urged to start this by representations from Boards of Trade and similar bodies, but once launched into it, it took possession of him and he pursued it with characteristic vigour and determination. As between shipments eastward and westward from Calgary he found a difference of about ten cents a hundredweight in favour of the eastern route over a longer distance. Reasons for and against this need not be recorded here. We are chiefly concerned with results.

It was a ease that bristled with technicalities, and in spite of John's love of doing everything himself he had to admit that this job was too big for him to handle alone. G. G. McGeer, a promising young lawyer of Vancouver, who had been a member of the last Legislature, was selected as Government counsel, and waged an aggressive campaign before the Railway Commission,

the Courts, and the Dominion Government. Details and technicalities were left largely in his hands.

John's part of the battle lay chiefly in the moulding of public opinion to his side, though occasionally he took his part with McGeer in important hearings which necessitated a number of journeys to Ottawa, the seat of the fight.

As was customary with him, he went down to the grass roots. I can remember reading through musty old tomes from the library, embodying *Hansard* reports of the debates in the Dominion House of Commons in the early eighties of the last century, when the Canadian Pacific project was under discussion. He combed the long and prolix speeches of Sir Charles Tupper, the interminable sentences of Edward Blake, the philosophic disquisitions of David Mills, and the witty and pointed statements of Sir John A. Macdonald. The latter, it always seemed to me, compressed more catchy argument into half a column than the others spread over whole pages ; but as leader he could confine himself to salients, whereas Sir Charles Tupper, as Minister of Railways, had to furnish the details.

In addition to these he read innumerable blue books and documents with particulars of Government assistance for railways all over the Dominion and its results. He looked up all the statutes dealing with the question, and became a veritable railway lawyer. He found the problem involved with weighty matters of Confederation, which finally led him to the larger question of better terms from the Dominion for the Province which he was to take up at a later stage.

Thus equipped John went forth mightily to battle and carried the war into distant places. On one occasion, when called to Ottawa to argue the matter before the Privy Council, he found the railway companies who were opposing him were not ready to proceed, and he would have to wait two weeks before the hearing began. Wait he could not. He had never learned how to play, and work was his only recreation.

He took advantage of the time to accept invitations to give addresses in Eastern Canada. He went as far east as Halifax and addressed gatherings in Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, and Brantford. He presented his case with a sincerity and vigour

that won not a few sympathizers in naturally hostile camps. On his way home he stopped at Fort William, the centre of C.P.R. shipping interests for eastern grain, and spoke to the Board of Trade on his subject. Those gentlemen probably regarded him as an enemy invading their fort, but they admired his courage and applauded his remarks even if they did not agree with his conclusions.

He also successfully elicited the co-operation of the neighbouring province of Alberta, and on one occasion went to Edmonton to address the United Farmers in convention. He met with some hostility at first, but he talked with them as a farmer to farmers, and finally they passed a resolution giving him unanimous support in his freight rates campaign. On another occasion he addressed a public meeting at Saskatoon, a wheat-growing centre of Saskatchewan. One of the papers there commented tersely on his speech :

“ Honest John made a good case.”

John had been long enough in public life to appreciate the strength of public opinion on Governments, and he had an idea that in a subtle way it was not without its influence on the Railway Commissioners or even on the courts. It is an imponderable entity that, like a wireless wave, enters and pleads unseen.

Whether it was John's speeches, McGeer's arguments, the justice of the cause, or a combination of the three, is hard to determine ; but as the fight was waged year by year the difference in freight rates was whittled down, and at last came a judgment of the Railway Commission ordering that freight rates on grain for export should be equalized between the east and the west.

John was warmly congratulated, but was not yet satisfied. While victory had been won on grain for export, the difference in rates on prairie grain for domestic consumption in British Columbia was as glaringly discrepant as ever, and there were similar apparent maladjustments of express rates.

John was urged about this time to rest on his laurels, and not to continue to worry his friends at Ottawa and the Railway Commission with further importunities.

“ No,” he told me one day, “ I have gone into this fight and



MRS. OLIVER

[Steffens-Colmer, Vancouver.]

will carry it to a finish. We are still unjustly treated, and I would rather resign my office than give the matter up."

So McGeer was instructed to continue the fight along the other lines. It was still going on when John was called from his labours, and is being continued by his successors in office, who supported him in principle though they criticized his methods and the expense involved.

Whether it was the result of the freight rate reductions or not, it is certain that within these years the flow of wheat through Vancouver grew from practically nothing to fifty million bushels, and eventually reached nearly a hundred million bushels in a single year. It had an immense effect on business in the city. Where there had been but one terminal elevator, half a dozen or more sprang up. In a few years shipping and building were doubled, bank clearings ran up and the city expanded on every side.

SCENE 50. HIS WEAKNESSES

NOT one but many qualifications are necessary to the character of the successful public man. Intellect and learning alone will not do, or college professors would be seated on the thrones of Stalin and Mussolini. On the other hand, force of character without knowledge and judgment is as dangerous as dynamite in the hands of a madman. Strength must be tempered by tact, and tact reinforced by decision.

Of the necessary qualifications John possessed an unusual number. He was gifted with a fluency of speech and readiness of wit capable of meeting any attack. He was fearless and determined, but his strength was humanized by the emotional touch of pity and sympathy. He was pugnacious but kind. He was big enough to keep his head firmly among temptations for social display, and in the hours of his greatest triumphs he remained just plain John. Above all, there burned within him an unquenchable flame of sincerity that nothing could dim. He was sure he was right and went ahead.

So much for our god's head of gold and front of steel, but in the feet was some intermingling of clay. He had the defects of his

qualities, and most of them arose from early training and long habit.

He was sixty years of age before he entered an executive position in the Government. He had taken many comparatively small contracts, but it was hardly necessary that in any of these he should delegate his authority. When there was a log to be lifted his shoulder would go under it ; when there was a hole to be dug his spade bit the earth. This habit of doing everything for himself persisted to the end of his life. He had great faith in himself and habitual distrust of others in the work he undertook.

All this was well on the farm or on the road contract, but in an executive position it was a real weakness. I have seen him spend hours with a stump of lead pencil adding up long rows of figures when there were adding machines in the building that would have done the work neatly in a fourth of the time. When he was framing a Redistribution Bill he would take a paint brush and colours to draw flamboyant maps, when just across the hall were expert map makers, who, under his directions, could have done it better and saved much valuable time. On different occasions when asked whether certain work could not be done for him, he would reply :

“ No, thanks, I can manage all right.”

The consequence was that work piled on his shoulders until he appeared like another Atlas bearing the world. He was at it from early morning till late at night. He had no time to go out for luncheon, but would have his daughter bring it to the office in a lunch-basket and a thermos-bottle, as if he had been toiling on his Delta farm fields in the precious hours of harvest. At night he took his labours with him, and sometimes when called to his home to assist, I would find him in his cosy study, sitting in shirt-sleeves, divested of collar and tie, and with huge carpet slippers on his feet, bending over some knotty problem.

All this detail labour took toll of John's great strength, and at times he exhibited signs of physical weariness, though his dauntless spirit kept him going.

Another of John's failings was a lack of the sense of proportion. All his life he had been dealing with small matters that came under his hand, and was obsessed with the copy-book maxims

“ Mony mickles mak’ a muckle,” and “ Take care of the pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves.” To the ordinary individual these rules may be applicable, but I rather think it is the business of the statesman to look after the pounds and leave the care of the pennies to his subordinates.

John was punctilious about trifles, and one of his colleagues once told me that he would spend more time discussing a proposed \$5 increase in a stenographer’s wages than would be devoted to matters in which thousands were involved. He believed in correctness to the uttermost farthing.

John prided himself justly on the possession of considerable journalistic ability, but all the same, I do not think he would have made a good editor. He did not always know just what to leave out or when to stop. Sometimes he loaded up his speeches with detail to such an extent that they became wearisome, and the main stream of his discourse was lost in the wandering marshes of many side issues. He thought it his duty to pour out all the facts in his capacious memory for a satiated public to feed upon. Speeches that would have been effective if dammed up within the confines of an hour were thinned and lost their force over the spreading swamps of a three hours’ discourse.

Another of John’s failings was a weakness for writing letters to the newspapers. If an attack on the Government appeared, he conceived it to be his duty as leader to reply, no matter that, if to the ordinary person, it did not seem worth notice. A public man who wishes to deal with these matters generally does so through the medium of an interview with a reporter. In that manner his case is effectively dressed up and given front-page space and prominence. Here again John’s distrust of others was evidenced. He often claimed that he was not correctly reported, and when he had a statement to give he sent it to the newspaper as an ordinary letter over his own signature.

The consequence was that it appeared in the correspondence column sandwiched in between a complaint from John Dingle-dog, of Clamshell Alley, about the state of the sidewalks, or a wail from the Honourable Dudley Doodlechuck, of the Bilious Boulevards, about the quality of the liquor served in the Government stores—begad !

This habit of John's was the source of some merriment at his expense. It was said that some of the letters originated with some wags in a club in the city who wished to get him going. They knew that they had only to attack to elicit a vigorous reply. At one of the balls given by the local journalists they issued a humorous sheet which declared that among those taking part was "John Oliver, Correspondent of the *Colonist*." The *Colonist*, being politically opposed, contained most of the attacks on the Government, but it was always ready to publish John's replies.

In his hard-worked days he was subject to fits of explosive irritation.

"I want to see that letter I got from John Smith, of Hayseed Corners, three months ago, about their school taxes, and what I said in reply," he would demand.

If it was not immediately forthcoming you heard about it. Thanks to an efficient stenographer it was generally on hand.

On one busy day he wanted some obscure document of ancient lineage from the library. The librarian was away, his busy assistant had been called elsewhere. They were unable to locate the document offhand.

"A nice lot of folks we keep around these buildings," he roared. "Did you ever hear of such a bunch? All away just at the very time you want anything. I'll see about this myself." And he stumped up to the library and stormed away at the assistants till he got what he wanted.

In reality he had a very efficient library staff, but on such occasions he was apt to be unreasonable.

After these explosions, however, he always seemed rather penitent and was particularly nice to those he had scolded.

It will be observed that John's failings were not very serious or morally delinquent, and that if they reacted injuriously at all it was upon himself. He had the microscopic rather than the telescopic mind, and his habit of seeing things bit by bit often prevented him from seeing them whole. He had wide visions at times, but work on their realization involved so much detail that the picture became inevitably blurred. It was like the attempt to organize an abstract truth—it had to be done with earthly

machinery of which the jarring clashed with the music of the spheres.

In all his errors John was conscientious. He believed that the labour they imposed was due from him in his position, and his failings, such as they were, leaned to virtue's side.

SCENE 51. HIS STRENGTH

We have seen some instances of John's weakness. Let us now turn to the evidence of his strength. The microscopic qualities of his mind carried with them an analytical keenness that was often used to advantage in the service of the province.

J. H. Hawthornthwaite, former Socialist leader, had reappeared in the House after an absence of several years. But he was no longer the fiery red leader of old. His intercourse with capitalists and business men had modified his revolutionary tendencies, and with this change seemed to have gone much of his fire and sarcasm, so that he was no longer the force he had been. After the war he moved a resolution urging the exemption from taxation of all returned soldiers or their families owning property up to \$2,000. As an instance of John's concrete logic, I quote a paragraph from his speech on this subject.

"How would this thing work out? Let us take a row of houses. In the first house is a soldier well-to-do with a place valued at \$2,000. Under this he would be free from taxation. The next place is owned by a soldier and valued at \$3,000. It is mortgaged to the hilt and he can hardly pay the interest, yet because it is valued at over \$2,000 he would get no relief from taxation. The next place is occupied by a soldier's widow. She does not own the property, but pays taxes through the rent, and she gets no relief from this measure. Do you mean to tell me that the Legislature is going to put a fool law like that on the statute books?"

Hawthornthwaite's old enmity to John had changed to warm admiration. He admitted that the Premier had shot his proposed

Bill to pieces. On another occasion he said he considered John Oliver the cleverest Premier British Columbia ever had.

Several eminent corporation lawyers once approached John with a proposal involving the expenditure of a great deal of outside capital in the province, but asking in return that the Government grant them important concessions. It was highly involved and technical, but John said he would consult with his colleagues and give them his answer within an hour.

When they met again he had prepared a reply covering every detail and setting forth the Government's position clearly and concisely.

One of the lawyers was the late E. V. Bodwell, K.C., of Victoria, who is numbered among the ablest legal practitioners that British Columbia ever knew. In remarking on this matter afterwards he is reported to have said :

"How is it that this man with so little education and no legal training can size up a matter like that so completely in so short a time? He's a wonder."

John was not without egotism, and liked to be complimented on his admittedly remarkable legal ability.

"I think I would have made a pretty good lawyer," I have heard him remark. Yet on another occasion, in referring to legal bills of charges against the Government, he was not so complimentary to lawyers.

"They are a lot of robbers," he remarked, which seemed somewhat at variance with his pride at being classified as one of them.

A local company approached the Government with a proposal to build an iron and steel smelter on the coast. John listened to their arguments and then drew up a statement showing what the Government would be prepared to do to assist.

William Sloan, Minister of Mines, was absent that day, and being deeply concerned in the matter he called at the office the next day to see what the Premier had proposed. John was absent, so I showed him a copy of his draft.

Sloan looked it over and was satisfied.

"He doesn't miss anything," he remarked. This was a compliment from one who was not profuse in praise. However,

though they were widely different in many respects, he had always been an admirer of John's ability.

"I stood for Oliver's election in the first place," he told me. "I knew he had the ability for the job."

One day there came into my office a rather large-sized, pleasant-looking man with a dark moustache.

"My name is Dunning," he said. "I would like to see the Premier if he is in."

I told him the Premier was out at the time, but if he would call the following morning I was sure he would be glad to meet him. Mr. Dunning sat and chatted affably for a while, and on the following morning made his call.

On another occasion there came in a clean-shaved man with a rather firm face, but evidently more taciturn and reserved than Mr. Dunning had appeared to be. This was Premier Greenfield, of Alberta, who had called for a conference previously arranged.

I mention these two callers because at this time they composed with John Oliver the triumvirate of English-born Premiers who ruled contemporaneously over the three western provinces of Canada. All had come out as immigrant lads in poor circumstances, and by dint of intelligence, pluck, and industry they had risen—a striking refutation of the suspicion that there is in Canada a prejudice against Englishmen that prevents their advancement.

Of the three John held his position longest. Mr. Greenfield retired shortly afterwards to become Agent-General for Alberta in England, and Mr. Dunning was called into the Federal Government. The other two may have had a broader outlook than John, but I question whether either of them had as intimate a knowledge of the requirements of his province. From the roots of a bitter experience had flowered his masterly understanding of its problems of dyking and drainage. From the same source he had acquired his knowledge of the difficulty of clearing its forest lands. The experience of his boyhood had given him an idea of mining, and through constant contact with the fishermen of the lower Fraser he had imbibed an understanding of their needs. His own modest sawmill operations, combined with the necessary logging, opened up for him the larger vistas of the requirements of the big logging and milling companies. Of irrigation and fruit growing

he had less experience, but he gave it intensive study. It is safe to say that no man, in wealth of practical experience, ever came to the Premiership of British Columbia better equipped.

SCENE 52. A MAN OF ACTION

JOHN was not content simply to hear about things. He wanted to see for himself.

Some question had arisen about the disposal of land on the Songhees Reserve, adjoining Victoria, which a previous Government had bought from the Indians. It was in the wettest part of winter, and John determined to see for himself, brought down a pair of big gum boots that reached to his knees—that he had probably used on his farm—and protected by these, trudged through the mire and mud to inspect the reserve. When he got back he took off his long boots and left them standing in the office, leaving some of his visitors to wonder whether he was Premier of British Columbia or foreman of a logging camp.

In another wet spell a man wrote from Dewdney in the Fraser Valley claiming damages against the Government because a drain placed by the Public Works Department by the roadside had choked up, overflowed, and flooded his fields. These matters of drainage had a peculiar grip on John, and small as the trouble seemed, he left his office one morning, drove eighteen miles to Sidney in his car, and took it with him by ferry to Bellingham. From there he drove to his own farm on the Delta for lunch. Then he scouted out and made his inspection, getting back to the farm for a short sleep. As the first ferry left Bellingham about five in the morning, he had to be up and away by four, but he caught the ferry and was back in his office at work by nine as usual.

His practical knowledge and stubbornness sometimes made him unpopular. In the Fraser River some fifty miles east of Vancouver lies Nicomen Island, fertile and of fair size, but constantly subject to flooding with the rise of the river. It had been dyked at various times, but the dykes were washed away. The

Provincial Government was strongly petitioned to put in a permanent dyke and save the island.

John had been over the ground, knew the situation thoroughly, and refused to accede.

A delegation of Vancouver business men came down to reinforce the request.

"Those poor settlers, Mr. Premier," said one of them, "are like your own children. Won't you do this for them and enable them to stay on their farms?"

John contended that it would cost less to buy the whole island than to put up a dyke that would be of any permanent use. He knew the constant shifting and erosion of the banks and there could be no guarantee that in any year such a dyke would not be destroyed. It was not a business proposition.

"Well, what would you do, say, if you owned the island?" he was asked.

"I would let the lower part go back to pasture," said John promptly, "and would retain the buildings and cultivated land on the higher part less subject to flooding. In that way the cattle could graze on the lower land and be drawn off at flood time."

That was his solution, and they could not move him further. There were a number of soldier settlers on the island and they were incensed.

"I wish it was John Oliver's head," remarked one of the women to a passer-by as she viciously snipped off a stalk of rhubarb.

John was attacked in the House for his action, but defended himself with his usual vigour. "I defy them," he said, shaking his fist at his opponents, "to go to the settlers who are clearing land in the bush in their districts, and ask them whether they think it just that they should be taxed to help these men to improve their more fertile lands. The settler toiling from morning to night with his axe among the stumps on the hillside asks for no help, and why should these men, with their open and far richer land, ask for it?"

Finally, I believe that some arrangement was made with the Dominion Government for a dyke on the island, but it did not shake John's belief that it was not a business proposition or that the value of the land equalled the cost of protection.

Little missed that microscopic brain of his. He scrutinized every Order in Council brought before him, and it was seldom that he failed to detect an error.

From one of the Departments one day came an Order dealing with a large sum of money.

"This is nice work, this is!" said John as he glanced over it. "They've got 70,000 here when it should be 90,000. Take that back and tell them to check it up and send it in corrected. Damn such carelessness."

On one occasion his analytical habit went astray. An Order came in appointing a University professor to undertake some Government educational work. It read, among other things:

"Professor A.—, D.Litt. and D.Lett."

I took it in to him, and he started to read it. A minute later the buzzer sounded and I re-entered his office.

"Look here," he said, glancing up from the paper, "I thought we were only appointing one man and here you've got three."

I explained to him that "D.Litt." and "D.Lett." were evidently abbreviations for the professor's degrees.

He lay back in his chair and laughed till he shook like a jelly. "Ho, ho! That's a good one on me, that is," he said.

It was another of John's strong points that he was generally willing to admit a mistake, and always ready to laugh at himself.

Another characteristic of his was speed of action. In the driest part of a dry summer a forest fire swept over the Merville Soldier Settlement, in the northern part of Vancouver Island. It came down with resistless force before a high wind, leaving a funeral array of charred tree trunks in its wake, and it wiped out nearly every home in the ill-starred settlement. It was all that the settlers and their families could do to get away with their lives.

In the dark hours of the morning someone telephoned the news to John. He rang me out of bed, and told me to get in touch with certain officials and take action at once. They were down early to the Parliament Buildings, but he was there before them. He called his colleagues together, and before the morning had passed they despatched a truck loaded with tents, bedding, cooking utensils, and food to the scene of the fire. He soon followed in person, and on surveying the scene lost no time in giving directions

and taking further measures of relief. On his return from the scene of desolation money was voted to help the settlers re-establish themselves, and everything possible was done to aid them.

Once again he exhibited the value of his practical knowledge and swift decision.

SCENE 53. THE HARDING RECEPTION

It was in the summer of 1923 that Warren Gamaliel Harding, President of the United States, visited Vancouver. The occasion was historic, for it was the first time an American President had set foot on Canadian soil during his term of office, and Harding had consented to go further and deliver a public address. The visit was incidental to a trip to Alaska and a call at Vancouver on the return voyage. The President and his wife had won all hearts in their journeyings, and the visit was regarded with keen anticipation. It was considered so important that the Usher of the Black Rod came all the way from Ottawa to supervise the ceremonies.

To John fell the task of welcoming the President on behalf of the people of the province, but he had given little thought to ceremonial. One afternoon when he came into the office I showed him a copy of the *Victoria Times* containing a despatch from Vancouver stating that the Usher of the Black Rod required that all persons who were to meet the President officially must be attired in formal morning dress. John exploded when he read it :

“This is a damned piece of impertinence,” he said with a thump on the desk, “telling people how they should dress. Here are a lot of Reeves and other officials coming in from the country who have no clothes like that. They can do as they like, but I shall go dressed as I damn well please.”

He afterwards gave out the substance of this statement to the Press. It was then explained that the first despatch had given a wrong impression and the rules would not be so stringent.

Anyhow, John wore his plain sack suit and straw hat when he met the President and read the address of welcome. Probably as a result of his first protest it had been announced that at a

banquet to be given in the evening in honour of the event the guests could come informally dressed. John went in evening clothes. If he had been informal in the morning when others were desired to be formal, he would at least be formal at night when they had been asked to disregard the rule.

On his return, as was often his custom, I heard him give his impressions of the President.

"A nice fellow, but struck me as not much above the average, though I suppose he must have some ability to have got where he is."

A few days later President Harding died rather suddenly in San Francisco. This, following directly the pleasant impression he had made, was heard with genuine sorrow in British Columbia, and John ordered that the flag in front of the Parliament Buildings should remain at half-mast until after the funeral, an honour never before accorded to a ruler of another country.

John no longer disdained evening dress when called upon to meet distinguished visitors at Government House, and with his hat removed he always looked well. With experience he had acquired ease, and in spite of lack of early education could converse with the best of them on ordinary topics. I have said he looked well with his hat removed, because it always appeared to me that there were only one or two kinds of hats that he could wear becomingly. One of these was a soft black felt with a broad brim, somewhat in the Quaker style, which he wore most frequently. This suited his rather full face and large head, and a slouched Panama also gave him an easy and comfortable look. But the tall, shining beaver he could seldom properly adjust. Usually it was worn with a slight tilt. He often wore a straw boater, but the narrow brim and confined top always appeared to be squeezing away from his head as if the lid were too tight for the pot. Occasionally he wore a tweed cap which was always too small for him and sat on the top of his massive grey head like a tomtit's nest on a cock of hay.

However, it was not his way to worry much about what he wore, as his mind was constantly preoccupied with more important things ; but he had a flair for the unexpected. He was already in his office when I came down one morning ; but when I

entered his room to greet him a strange man met me there. He was seated in the Premier's chair, but instead of the neatly trimmed, tapering beard of John Oliver I saw a fat, broad chin showing beneath a huge, grey moustache.

"Hullo!" I exclaimed. "Whatever has happened to you?"

He looked up with a grin. "I hadn't seen my chin for about thirty years, and I thought it was getting time for me to see what it looked like."

There was no gainsaying this argument, but I thought that the change had by no means improved his appearance. With the familiar beard seemed to have gone some of the dignity with which, on fitting occasions, he could adorn his office. In this opinion I was far from being alone. The members of his family and his colleagues in the Government liked it no better than I did, and by dint of much bantering and persuasion after a short period he consented to let it grow again.

In the meantime his chin, if barren of hair, was a fertile subject of fun for the columnists and cartoonists of the provincial newspapers. For a time it completely superseded matters of State. About this time I had occasion to visit Olympia, the capital of the neighbouring State of Washington, where I met a former Victorian. His first remark was: "I hear that Premier Oliver has shaved off his whiskers. I wonder what he looks like now?"

Similar comments were heard on all hands, nor did they diminish as John's beard graduated through the tramp and hayseed stages back to the dignity of the Premiership again. He had occasion to go to Ottawa on some urgent Government business about this time. Another man might have shrunk from meeting the Federal dignitaries with a ragged clothes-brush on his chin, but John cared less about these things than most men. Fitzmaurice, the genial cartoonist of the Vancouver Province, created much hilarity by picturing the Premier at different stages of his journey with a varying length of beard, which by the time he reached Ottawa was not unlike the housewife's half-worn-out broom. Fitzmaurice pictured him seated on a bench in the Ottawa Parliament-buildings grounds with a policeman, baton in hand, standing over him and saying:

"You look too much like one of them Bolsheviks. We don't want your sort around here. You'd better move on."

But as the beard grew longer the jests became fewer, and by the time it had flushed back to normal they entirely disappeared.

SCENE 54. BURNED IN EFFIGY

As another election approached it became necessary to redistribute the seats in the Legislature to meet the changes in population revealed by the Dominion census of 1921. On the last occasion this had been done by a Commission presided over by a Supreme Court Judge. John had criticized this as an unnecessary expense, and this time resolved to tackle it himself single-handed.

So he set to work with voter's lists, maps, and brushes and paint. The latter were John's own selected tools. He took a big map of the province, divested himself of coat and waistcoat, and went at it. He spread maps on the floor and remoulded them to his heart's desire. With one colour he marked the boundaries of districts that should stand as they were, with another he depicted those that should be enlarged, and with another those that should be reduced according to fluctuations in the numbers of votes as carefully worked out from the lists. By the time he got through his map looked like a ragged Joseph's coat, but it suited his purpose and he was proud of his handicraft.

In a mountainous country like British Columbia you cannot allocate districts by meridians and township lines as in other provinces. An irregular mountain range must serve as a dividing line. John knew his province, and took into consideration the watersheds, the settled valleys, and the uninhabited areas. He worked honestly with the object of giving just representation and at the same time reducing the membership to save expense.

The last objective developed prickles to sting him. The taxpayers are always more willing to add to the general cost of government than lose some local advantage ; or at least what they consider an advantage, since it is very questionable whether a district represented by four members is in the long run any better off than if it were represented by two.

John noted an anomaly in the membership for Victoria and Vancouver, since the latter city with over three times the population had only six members as against Victoria's four. John thought he could bring the two more into proportion if he included with Victoria the adjoining districts of Oak Bay and Esquimalt. The latter constituency was represented by R. H. Pooley, sitting in succession to his father, the former Speaker.

When John's proposal got noised abroad, as such things will, there was at once a great outcry against it as an attempt to gerrymander "Harry Pooley" out of his seat. I do not think that was John's intention, since he held that there was nothing to prevent Mr. Pooley from running in the enlarged Victoria; but one could hardly expect his opponents to place this construction upon it.

One night an indignation meeting was held in the Sailors' Home at Esquimalt, and it ended in the audience resolving itself into a male chorus which poured out into the street singing, "We'll hang old John to a sour-apple tree." Instead of hanging, however, they decided to use some of the tree for burning him. They made a fire in the street, and making up a bundle appropriately clothed, they wrote "HONEST JOHN" in large letters across the breast. They tossed it on the flames and the image of John ascended to heaven on wings of smoke.

Mr. Pooley, and other of John's opponents, deplored this action, but I do not think it troubled the victim very much. He was too busy with other things to give it much thought, and I never heard him say anything about it, though I could imagine him more amused than horrified at the thought of his scarecrow crackling on those sacrificial flames. Nor do I think that it would have turned him from his purpose. But he had his party caucus to deal with, and with an election approaching they were not inclined to antagonize public feeling more than they considered necessary.

I can fancy that John had some warm arguments behind the closed doors of the caucus room, but the upshot was that Esquimalt remained outside Victoria, and the membership of the House, instead of being reduced, was increased by one.

SCENE 55. A FAMILY MAN

THROUGHOUT these busy years the Oliver family tree had grown to maturity and was shedding its leaves and seeds abroad in Nature's wise and mysterious way. The eldest daughter, Alice, was now Mrs. Callow, and was settled in Seattle. The second daughter, Nellie, was wedded to Rev. F. E. Runnalls, a pastor of the United Church in Vancouver. The sons were all married. Only one, Robert, the eldest, practising as a physician in Hamilton, lived outside the province. Arthur and John were on the farms in Delta, Joseph was practising law in Vancouver, and Charles was conducting the business of the Oliver Chemical Company, manufacturing orchard sprays and fertilizers in Penticton for the use of Okanagan fruit growers. In this business his father had an interest and assisted him financially. Only Mildred, the youngest daughter, remained at home with her parents. She drove her father to and from work in the motor-car, brought his lunch to the office, and was helpful to him in many ways. In return he showed great pride and confidence in her.

In their family life they continued to set a good example of plain living and clean thinking. There was a strain of religion in the family and in John that often upheld him in the hour of trial. They had, since coming to Victoria, been in the habit of attending the First Presbyterian Church, probably drawn in by the influence of friends. The atmosphere suited them. They found in it a comforting spiritual home; and in the pastor, the Rev. W. G. Wilson, a true friend in the hour of need. When with Union it became the First United Church they naturally stayed with it, and I imagine that John was well pleased with the movement, since he had been connected with both the Methodist and Presbyterian branches. I believe too that he was an admirer of the Scottish characteristics of his fellow worshippers. He liked their kindliness, industry, and thrift—and he certainly could sympathize with their stubbornness. He was seldom missing from his pew at any morning service, his portly form and ruddy face shedding a human benediction around him.

John had a Briton's reserve, and seldom spoke of religious

matters in ordinary discussion ; but at a time when he was subject to bitter attacks from his opponents he confided a secret to an intimate friend :

“ I have a good deal to put up with in this life,” he said in reference to his public position, “ but it never worries me for very long at a time. Every night before I go to sleep I try to be at peace with my conscience and my God.”

Herein, perhaps, lay the secret of his strength. When a man can shut out for a space each day the noises of this busy world and enter into the deep silence where the Voice of the Infinite can be heard—for that time he has a taste of heavenly peace. The soul is washed in the elemental streams that flow from the spiritual fountains of the world, and I think John Oliver must have come forth strengthened and renewed because for a time he had walked in high places with God.

In spite of his supreme self-confidence, there were moments when John had his feeling of imperfection, and he admitted it. Still living in Hartington, England, was a branch of the family known as “ the musical Olivers.” They kept in touch with their distinguished relative, of whom they were naturally proud, and advised him of their progress in music. He received a paper telling him of the distinction won by one of them, and in acknowledging it he wrote :

“ The receipt of the paper has caused my thoughts to go back to Hartington and the surrounding district more than for many years, and I can see myself sitting on a form in the old Methodist Chapel with James Oliver (your grandfather, I presume), and I can scarcely realize that I am a grandfather myself with the responsibility of chief ruler over a province many times larger in area than the British Isles. Yet so it is. I hope that your talent for music may be more perfect than is my talent for ruling.”

Speaking of Hartington reminds me of another of his relatives there, who later wrote lamenting : “ There is not in Hartington to-day another boy with the pluck and ability of John Oliver or his courage and industry. As one of the old men said to father lately : ‘ A little wark do sarve a long way nowaday.’ ”

John, with his portly form, ruddy face, and white hair and

beard, looked the ideal grandfather, and without much dressing up would have made an excellent Santa Claus. The children realized this. I have seen the little tots come into the office, and run toward him with outstretched arms crying :

“ Hello, Grandpa.”

And John would take them in his arms and swing them aloft with : “ Well, Dorothy Dimple, how are you to-day ? ”

It spoke well for his fondness for the children that they ran toward him so readily. His pastor later related that John had told him once that it was often with rather a feeling of sadness that he would pass a group of children at play, since it made him realize how much he had missed in life in that he had never found time to play himself.

The children always found in John a ready welcome, and in his office he would take them on his knees and treat them to the apples and peppermints of which he generally kept a stock on hand.

And all this time a heavily built man, now far advanced in his eighties and wearing a long white beard, sitting in the shelter of the old Ontario homestead, would read the Victoria paper that arrived each day, and would say to his neighbours with a laugh of pride :

“ And they call him the Grand Old Man of British Columbia. If he is an old man where do I come in ? ”

And so it continued till the sturdy old Briton fell by the wayside and slept with his ninetieth milestone in sight.

SCENE 56. THE THIRD PARTY

As another election approached prospects did not look too bright for John's party. They had been eight years in office, and knew that change is the law of political life, and they were still in the trough and backwash of the wave that had carried them to victory four years ago. The ebbtide had not yet changed to the flow.

John was no student of history, but he was quick to pick up hints and stories and use them for his purpose. The Govern-

ment had lost a seat in a by-election at Cranbrook, and Mr. Bowser, in the House, did not forget to taunt them with it and use it as a forecast of what would happen when they went to the country. John replied :

“ I think I can tell the Leader of the Opposition in the words of King Charles to his brother James, ‘ They’ll never kill me, James, to make thee King.’ ”

And in fact Bowser found himself battling with a rising tide of discontent within his own party. At the last convention he had been triumphantly re-elected to leadership, but the mutterings of the disaffected remained. In the days of the McBride administration he had been the “ No ” man of the Government. In his position as chief law officer of the Crown some disagreeable tasks had fallen to his lot and he had discharged them bluntly and fearlessly. His brusque, decided manner of refusal had made enemies for him here and there throughout the province, and their whispers rolled into the muttered chorus of discontent which ran : “ What’s the good of Bowser ? We’ve been beaten twice under him already. We shall never win with him as leader.”

The majority of the Conservative Party, however, admired their old leader’s ability and courage and were content to go forward under his leadership. And they would have gone on to victory, only that about this time a thwarting event occurred.

The demands for an investigation of the affairs of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway had never entirely been quieted. At the time of the Parliamentary inquiry Bowser refused point-blank to give evidence about the receipt of campaign funds. He threatened that, if driven far enough, he could tell a story that his opponents would not like, and it was noticed that they did not press him very severely.

All this aroused suspicion in the public mind and culminated in the formation of a Third Party, whose slogan was : “ Put Oliver out : Don’t let Bowser in.” The organization called itself “ The Provincial Party.” It would probably have perished from infantile paralysis for want of funds, but at the opportune time it enlisted the sympathy of General A. D. McRae, of Vancouver, a man of great wealth and big business connections. He injected a shot of the gold cure into it, and the infant not only got upon its

feet, but began to caper and strut. The organization was composed of dissidents from both the old parties, but with the Conservatives considerably predominating.

With his opponents suffering most from the defection one would have supposed that John would view this movement with complacency. But it was not his way. He was essentially a lover of the two-party system, and he resented this intrusion as likely to spoil their nice war. Moreover, General McRae, the leader and backbone of the movement, appeared to him as the embodiment of a class to which he was decidedly averse. John's own modest competency had been built up through years of arduous toil, and he regarded with suspicion those who, as he would have put it, "made too much money in too short a time." His own way to wealth had been by work and thrift; General McRae's he regarded as the pathway of manipulative schemes. A rough, honest Esau himself, he was not going to let any scheming Jacob get away with his birthright—not even though he were regarded by the dissidents as a father in Israel. He may have been wrong in his surmises, but such were his thoughts.

Consequently, as the election drew nearer John was found in the peculiar position of directing an occasional crossfire at Bowser and aiming his main bombardment at General McRae, whom he styled "the unscarred hero." At the same time, as Bowser was in the Legislature and McRae was not, his personal contacts were still chiefly with his old antagonist. Bowser used to taunt him with his sobriquet of "Honest John," demanding to know why he assumed such a title as if he were the only honest man in the country. John retorted that the prefix came from others and not from himself, and that he had yet to hear anybody speak of "Honest Bowser."

Sometimes, when John threw a blunt question across the floor, Bowser would sit in grim silence and refuse to answer.

"There he sits," said John triumphantly, "dumb as one of his own Crescent oysters." Mr. Bowser had a large interest in an oyster company operating at Crescent Bay, near John's farm.

Bowser, however, could irritate John as no one else could, and there was a suspicion that he often did so purposely, knowing that

when his opponent's wrath was roused he was apt to explode with statements that made an easy target for attack. Bowser had drawn up a lengthy platform for the Conservative Party, full of promises which John loved to ridicule. He was doing so one evening in the Legislature when Bowser remarked :

"The Premier is very fond of quoting the Conservative platform. He must sleep with it under his pillow."

"No, sir," said John, rising with a smile. "I can tell my honourable friend that I keep it where it ought to be—in the seat of my chair."

"Then," retorted Bowser, "I hope you'll be able to incubate some useful legislation."

John joined heartily in the laugh at his expense, and afterwards admitted that "Bowser had it on him that time."

Most of his speech on that particular night, however, was devoted to General McRae, whose business career he submitted to pitiless scrutiny, and he warned them then and there that this was only a beginning, or as he termed it, "Just a shot across the bows."

General McRae, though he may or may not have been, "the unscarred hero" referred to by John, proved an astute warrior in political strife. He not only answered John's charges one by one, but with his golden fan he stirred up an effective counterblast. This appeared in the shape of a booklet called *The Searchlight*, published at irregular intervals in Vancouver. It was ably and catchily edited, and I fancied I could see in the workmanship the hand of an old journalistic friend of mine, an able and honourable man, who I do not doubt sincerely believed that there was an underground sewer connecting the two old parties and that it should be exposed and purified. It was this sincerity and vigour that gave power to the Searchlight charges which were broadcast throughout the province.

These charges were mostly in connection with the Pacific Great Eastern Railway, which was pictured as a source of political corruption and a monument of mismanagement of public funds. The Provincial Party, through this organ, demanded a Royal Commission to investigate all these transactions, which included a specific allegation that Mr. Bowser for the Con-

servatives and Mr. Sloan for the Liberals had each received from the old P.G.E. contractors \$50,000 to be applied to campaign funds.

The charges were backed by affidavits and emphasized by cartoons, one of which represented John and Bowser as Siamese twins about to be bumped off the track by a Pacific Great Eastern locomotive. There were others in similar strain joining the two parties and intimating corruption on the part of both. The campaign was effective. People began to think there was something in the charges, and asked why the Government was afraid of an investigation. In fact, it was said that had there been an election at that time the Provincials would have swept the country.

John had hitherto been obstinate in his opposition to a Royal Commission, which he regarded as a useless expense, since so far as he knew there was nothing to investigate and charges to the contrary were just so much wind. But the Government now realized that with an election in the offing the charges must be dealt with, or disaster would follow. They appointed Mr. Justice Galliher, of the Court of Appeal, as Commissioner to hear the evidence and make the findings.

John appeared on the stand during the Commissioner's hearing, but they got little satisfaction out of him. He was asked whether he had not stated some eight years earlier that the P.G.E. agreement of the old Government looked like an arrangement for making millionaires out of scoundrels, but said he had kept no notes. Under cross-examination he was combative as usual, so that examining counsel had reason to think they had captured an untamed bear.

After a sitting of about four weeks the Commissioner found that no evidence had been adduced to show any wrongdoing or mismanagement on the part of the Government or its predecessors in connection with the matter, while the personal charges against Bowser and Sloan had failed for want of evidence.

The commissioner's finding had a damaging effect on the prospects of the Third Party, but they went into the contest all the same with candidates in nearly every constituency. With three parties in the field no one knew just where they were, and,

from the standpoint of the two old parties, the campaign was a most unsatisfactory one.

John stumped the province as usual and, though noticeably tired between times, appeared to have lost none of his old vigour in the heat of conflict. He attacked McRae with the right hand and jabbed at Bowser with the left, and unquestionably got in some telling blows. In his martial enthusiasm he made one mistake. He challenged General McRae to meet him on the platform and discuss openly the charges he had made. McRae promptly accepted, and suggested that they might meet at Salmon Arm in the Interior at a political picnic that had been planned, and he, as host, would provide the barbecue of roasted ox.

John sniffed the roast beef of battle from afar, and I have no doubt would have accepted ; but he did not like to have his opponent arrange the terms, and while he was considering these, his colleagues in the Government came in with a determined attempt to pull him off. Their counsel prevailed and John rather reluctantly ignored the General's offer ; to the disappointment of the good folk of Salmon Arm, who were deprived at one stroke of a free feed of roast beef and an equally free fight between two noted warriors in different spheres.

In that campaign John had to submit to much heckling, and sometimes he became irritable. He was taunted with the heavy losses they had incurred on soldier settlement schemes and replied warmly :

“ I would rather lose every cent we put into these schemes than have our soldiers and their wives develop a conviction that this country cared nothing for their sacrifices.”

He asked that he be given an opportunity to finish the work he had begun in the freight rates campaign and the battle for better terms from the Dominion.

“ I want to do something useful for the rest of my life, and not be on the defensive all the time from unwarranted attacks.”

One drawback he faced was that his popular Finance Minister John Hart had announced his intention to retire from politics in order to devote his attention to private business.

Bowser seized on this at once. “ Hart is the only sensible man

in the Government," he declared. "He has his ear to the ground and knows what's coming."

Another pun passed around was :

"They say John Oliver's sure to be beaten."

"Why?"

"Because he has lost Hart."

But John had by no means lost heart. Through the interior of the province he was received with an enthusiasm that filled him with hope. It also stimulated his vigour beyond his capacity, and when he returned to finish his campaign in Victoria he was a very tired old man.

In the capital a spirit of opposition to the Government had developed. It was the home of the civil service, and the refusal of an increase in salary, coupled with the rise in ministers' pay and members' indemnities, had not been forgotten. Apart from the votes of the civil servants, they represented an intelligent class, and the influence of their families ramified through the entire city. Added to this was the opposition of the working people who had been displeased with John's attitude in the times of unemployment.

There was hostility and much heckling in the Victoria meetings he addressed, and John, wearied by two weeks of incessant campaigning, answered them more irritably than wisely.

"Sit down, baby," he cried to one interrupter.

He was angered by certain preachers who had condemned the Government's liquor policy.

"I would like to take a club to some of these men who get up in their pulpits and tell people they shouldn't touch politics because they are too dirty. There are not nearly as many crooked people in politics as there are among others who want them to be crooked."

The Government's claim for credit for the freight rates victory was met by charges that the cost was exorbitant.

"How about Jerry McGeer's bills?" asked one heckler at John's last meeting in Victoria.

John retorted by asking what his questioner thought about the amount the old Government had squandered in buying the Songhees reserve.

"Two blacks don't make a white," said the heckler.

"Some of you fellers," said John wrathfully, "are neither black nor white, but just yellow through and through."

"That's a poor answer," was the muttered comment of the audience. When, a little later, John announced that he was going to deal with the transportation charges question, one man rose in the rear of the audience and called out, "Good night, John." He was apparently one of an organized band of hecklers who walked out after him, followed by a large part of the crowd. John called out after them :

"If you fellows had left an hour ago it would have been a good thing and would have saved a lot of time."

"Good night, John," was called back. "We're going where you'll be going to-morrow. We're going 'ome."

"It's always the loose box makes the most noise," was John's parting shot.

He was a politician of the old school and still used the *tu quoque* argument. If, unable to defend a position, he could show that the other side had done something worse he felt that he had scored a genuine triumph. It was part of the old belief that if you could mix your own dark dye with a blacker dye from the other fellow's vat you could draw forth your political garments white as the driven snow. It was a chemical combination that, in fusing two colours slightly distinct, produced a glorious garment alluring in its prismatic hues.

But Victoria is the home of an intelligent and cultured people, and they did not so readily accept this reasoning.

SCENE 57. DEFEAT AND TRIUMPH

THAT election, in June 1924, was a bad blow to John. The Government came out of it in a welter of confusion, and for a time did not know whether it had been re-elected or not ; but John was sure that he had personally been defeated and the acid pill dissolved in his mouth with bitter taste. Victoria had utterly rejected him. He was not even first on his own ticket, and was a thousand votes behind the lowest Conservative.

On election night they called him to the Liberal Committee

Rooms and tried to cheer him up with the tooting of horns and election jokes, but it was evident that the jazz band at the funeral only accentuated his grief. He tried to smile, but the shade of disappointment dulled its brightness. It hurt him to think that, while all his fellow-ministers had been elected, he, their leader, had gone down to inglorious defeat. He was the lone charred trunk in a grove of blooming trees.

On the following morning he came down to the office trailing clouds of gloom. Perfunctorily and absently he went about his work in a manner altogether unusual with him. It was as if his unshed tears had sunk into the depths of his soul, forming a stagnant pool which sent forth a vapour of gloom that spread like a dark cloud over all his surroundings. To tell him that the latest returns showed that the Government had not fared so badly and that no doubt a seat would be found for him, did not comfort him much.

Nor did he seem to derive any satisfaction from the defeat of his old opponent Bowser, who in Vancouver had been buried beneath an almost similar majority to that recorded against John in Victoria. In fact, I suspect that John had a little fellow-feeling for his old rival as a victim of General McRae's Third Party, which had split the Conservative vote in Vancouver so badly. If opponents in victory they were companions in the misery of defeat.

When the absentee votes were counted the position of the Government was improved. Mrs. Smith was found to have defeated General McRae, which completed the overthrow of three party leaders—a unique event in the history of the province. There were twenty-three Liberals in a house of forty-eight—not a majority, but some of the Independents were friendly to the Government, and, with no wish for another election, were not likely to allow them to be defeated in the House. As the Conservatives had only seventeen it was impossible for them to form a Government, and, following British tradition, it was the duty of the party with the largest following to carry on.

As this became known, John's gloom gradually disappeared, and was finally dispersed by the outburst of sympathy over his defeat. At least three members offered to resign their seats for him without delay ; but two of the constituencies covered large areas,

and were distant from the capital, while the other was by no means certain for the Government.

In the meantime letters continued to come to John urging him to "stay with the job" and pointing out that his retirement might mean the ruin of the party.

Finally a seat was opened for him at Nelson by the resignation of Kenneth Campbell, who had been elected by a good majority, but was willing to give place to his chief in order to devote himself more entirely to private business. Nelson was rather distant from Victoria, but had the advantage of being a small, compact constituency which did not require much time to cover.

So John went forth once more to battle and 'forgot his troubles.

"At least I'll know where I stand whatever comes," he remarked before leaving.

He was not elected without a contest. A local man, W. H. Houston, ran as an Independent with the backing of the Conservatives and some of the old Provincials. Before the fight was ended R. H. Pooley, who had succeeded Bowser as Opposition Leader, appeared on the scene, to be followed by General McRae also supporting Houston, so that leaders, certain, doubtful, and deposed were all in the fray. General McRae's activity was probably the first step in his return to the Conservative fold in which he was afterwards to attain considerable prominence.

His experience had taught John caution, and he was milder in his references to the Conservatives than he had been on former occasions, but when it came to General McRae he had to let himself go occasionally. He denounced the General as the usurper of the leadership of the Opposition, and scored his followers as "a band of mud slingers."

Like most by-elections in semi-rural districts it was rife with demands for local expenditures. First of these was a request for a bridge across the arm of Kootenay Lake at that point. It was a big and costly undertaking, and when it was put up to John at his first meeting he balked and snorted like a refractory horse on his Delta farm.

"I will not promise you a bridge, nor will I permit any of my colleagues to promise you a bridge," he said bluntly. Afterwards he modified this by promising that the Government would have

soundings and borings made to test the feasibility of the bridge and report on its cost.

Evidently the Nelson people admired his frankness, and were satisfied with his replies, for he was elected by a big majority. On election night there was great rejoicing, and coming as a reaction after his defeat, he was doubly happy. John, colour-blind with the haze of victory, kissed all the lady supporters who gathered in the committee room to congratulate him, and had coins distributed as largesse among the urchins who followed their parents to pick up such crumbs as might fall from the table of triumph. Opponents generously joined in the congratulations, and his supporters gave him a great send-off.

The news was received with great joy by the Liberal Party throughout the province, and when John reached Vancouver the following night he found a crowd waiting at the station to meet him with a band. They gathered around to shake him by the hand and almost carried him to the steamer on which he was to sail for Victoria forthwith. He was called upon for a speech, and told them that he was thankful to be given an opportunity to finish the tasks he had begun, and that he proposed to start right in to do it at his office at nine o'clock the next morning.

There were so many who gathered to shake hands and have a word with him that it looked as if John in his tired condition would never get to his room on the steamer ; but Major Dick Burde, the irrepressible Independent from Alberni, who had assisted the Government in the campaign and accompanied the Premier home, came gallantly to the rescue.

"Lay off, you fellows," he cried out, "and let the old man get to bed."

And no doubt John slept happily that night in the consciousness that the people were glad to have the old chief back.

SCENE 58. ON THE JOB

TRUE to his promise, John was back at work in his office by nine o'clock the following morning and, feeling secure in his position as an elected member of the Legislature and head of the Government for another term, he grasped his task with all his old certitude and decision.

He took up again the freight rates campaign for further concessions, and he added to it a fight for better terms of which more will be heard.

These necessitated occasional journeys to Ottawa to confer with the Dominion Government. His attitude on these occasions was well described by Charles L. Shaw, of the Vancouver Province, who wrote :

"Occasionally a white-haired giant of a man goes down to Ottawa, thumps a few desks, and makes himself heard."

On another occasion, Mr. Shaw wrote a story for *MacLean's Magazine* which the Premier denied ; but I have no doubt that the writer had heard it and accepted it in good faith as characteristic of the man, for John, in his advanced years and colourful personality, had now reached that stage in which legends gathered around him.

This story was that in one of his trips after a blizzard had swept the prairie and the ground was mantled with white, the train in which John was travelling was stalled and the engine dead.

A number of the passengers got out and gathered around the engineer and fireman, who were peering at the locomotive in an endeavour to ascertain the cause of the trouble.

"Among the most restless of the spectators was a white-whiskered man with ponderous shoulders. He worked his way through the group, examined the exterior of the locomotive with a critical eye, and set to work. In a moment the frigid air was burst with a shaft of steam. The white-haired man stood back and surveyed his achievement with a smile.

"Nothing much wrong there," he told the engineer. "Just frozen up a bit. She'll run now."

The engineer and the shuffling crowd gazed at the voluntary mechanic with awe, when the conductor, impatiently regarding his time-piece, yelled "Board," and the incident closed.

The successful meddler, though the engine crew and most of the passengers never knew it, was John Oliver, Premier of British Columbia.

Mr. Shaw added that this achievement was probably a relic of the days when John drove his own threshing engine and secured the first steam engineer's certificate issued in British Columbia. In spite of John's denial of the details the story stands as characteristic of the man.

Another story, less characteristic, was that in one of his Ottawa trips he was discussing the Doukhobor situation with Premier Mackenzie King. The newspaper story ran :

"I understand," said the Dominion Premier, "that they are in the habit of parading *in puris naturabilis*."

"Worse than that," said John. "They go round without a stitch on."

The Right Honourable Mr. King can remember no such conversation. Like Canute and the sea, or Alfred and the burning cakes, it is just one of those mythical stories that gather around certain men and emphasize their greatness.

These same Doukhobors were a subject of no little worry to John. A comparatively small section of them insisted on showing themselves to their neighbours as artists' models. They appeared to hold it as an article of their religion that since man, and woman too, had been created naked, it was the purpose of the Maker that they should continue in that state as far as the weather and the police would permit. But in this age we are so removed from Eden, and the human body has so degenerated from the perfection of Adam and Eve, that in spite of the poet's plea :

"Beauty unadorned's adorned the most,"

there was a general demand that they should be compelled to conceal their loveliness. These gaunt, bewhiskered men and flat-faced women were regarded rather as subjects for a crazy house than for group sculptures by Michael Angelo or for paintings

by Raphael. So the fire brigade was called in to cool their militant ardour with a squirt from the hose which their divine afflatus was unable to withstand. They retired for the time, but when they were dried and warmed the spiritual ardour glowed again ; and at a later date the police showered them with itching powder which sent them squirming to their homes. While scratching themselves they probably felt as if they had fallen into the first circle of a hughouse Inferno, but you could not scratch the religious mania out of them, and they continue to be troublesome to this day.

But this was not the worst of the problem. In their opposition to education they burned down the schoolhouses in their settlements, they refused to register births and marriages, and declined to pay taxes. Stern vegetarians, they would have nothing to do with carnal devourers of flesh. One of them wrote to John protesting that the Government had sent to instruct their children a teacher "who eats meat like a cat." Matters got no better when the Doukhobor leader, Peter Veregin, senior, was blown to death by a bomb as he was travelling in a train along the Kettle Valley Railway. Three others were killed with him, including John McKie, Conservative member-elect for Grand Forks, on his way to attend his first session at Victoria. The bomb had evidently been placed under a seat in the train, but just who placed it there has never been discovered. Veregin had his difficulties with some recalcitrants among his followers, and it was suspected that some of them might have been active in the conspiracy.

The vacancy caused by Mr. McKie's death was filled by the election of Dougald McPherson, a Government supporter, so that their strength was a little enhanced.

The Government proceeded to take strong measures with the disaffected Doukhobors. Those who refused to pay taxes had their goods sold by auction, and resistance was met by force. This had a quieting effect on them for a time. The burned schools were rebuilt and the cost assessed against the Doukhobors.

John received one anonymous letter, purporting to come from a friend, which read :

"The Doukhobors intend to do violence to your house or your person before the month is up. Take this as a tip."

John did not take this threat seriously, but as it caused some alarm to his wife and family he turned it over to the police. Nothing further came of it.

He visited the Doukhobor settlement at Brilliant in the Kootenay Valley, and came back well impressed with their industry, thrift, and good farming—qualities which always appealed to him. He said he was inclined to help them within the bounds of reason, but this offer was soon followed by unreasonable demands. They asked that the Government should recoup them for the cost of a bridge they had built and a road they had made to their settlement. He replied that they had done these things without consulting the Government, or asking their advice, and would not accede to their request.

In his last years of office John travelled about the country and mingled with the people more often than had been his wont. His colleagues in the Government, recognizing that he was a slave to detail, had insisted that he should divest himself of all other offices than that of Premier, and to this he had rather reluctantly consented ; but he was getting on toward the three-score-and-ten, and had to admit to himself that he could not stand the strain so well as in his more youthful years. The change increased his personal popularity, for wherever he went his frankness, humanity, and whimsical humour brought him new friends.

SCENE 59. "BEFORE THE BEAK"

JOHN had to put up with all the annoyances inseparable from his office, and petty charges were among them. Directly following the turmoil of his last campaign he received a blue paper summoning him to appear before the court at Coquitlam, a little town near Vancouver, on a charge of cruelty to animals.

It all arose out of one of John's own laws, which he had fathered with good intention. He had enacted a Bill known as "An Act for the Conservation of Domestic Animals." It provided that



Schenck, N.Y. Westminster

THE OLIVER FAMILY GROUP

when horses or cattle were being ill-treated or starved the Government might take possession and feed them up, charging the cost against the owner. If he refused to pay the animals could be sold at auction, and after the expenses had been deducted the balance would be returned to the original possessor.

A complaint came to the Government that a contractor near Coquitlam had been starving his horses. The Provincial Police were ordered to investigate and made seizure. The horses were transferred to another pasture, but it was alleged that the field looked as if a lawn-mower had been over it, and the animals were no better off than before. Under these circumstances someone had a summons issued, charging John, as responsible head of the Government, to appear on the indictment of cruelty.

John went over to Coquitlam fuming about this waste of his precious time. The little courthouse was packed.

The spectacle of a Premier of the Province hauled up in his old constituency of Dewdney to be tried by a magistrate (probably of his own creation) for the breaking of one of his own laws was not to be missed.

John, in his usual fashion, went surging through the crowd like a galleon with all sails set, shouldering aside the smaller craft in his way. In the course of his progress he bumped rather sharply into one of the witnesses for the prosecution, who resented it as an act of intentional hostility, and bristled up defiantly.

“ Hit me, sir, if you dare,” he challenged.

John slackened sail for a minute to look at his challenger.

“ I’ll hit you plenty when I’m good and ready,” he said grimly. Then added impatiently : “ Oh, shut up and sit down ! ”

Whether it was the authority of John’s tone and position or the presence of the police is not stated, but the newspaper scribe who recorded this conversation added that the hostile witness obeyed.

John on the witness-stand must have borne some resemblance to an elephant charged with crushing an unseen flea. He told them that he had never seen the horses in question and did not know where they were.

The case was promptly dismissed, and John issued from the courtroom forgetting all about his threat against the hostile witness.

SCENE 60. CARDS ON THE TABLE

JOHN, as we have seen, was called upon to address many gatherings on many topics. Usually he talked, on such occasions, conversationally in an impromptu way ; but if dealing with some serious or financial question he made some preparation, though it was very seldom he wrote out a speech in full. His method was all his own. He had a pack of white cards of a size that he could conveniently hold in the hand. These were numbered in order, and on each he wrote out headings for his speech, marking in red ink the points he wished to emphasize and writing figures large so that they would easily catch his eye. He found it better than using paper, because the stiff card could be held easily between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand without interfering with the gestures he loved to use.

"Lay your cards on the table," was a challenge often flung to his opponents across the House. He set the example by laying his own cards there as he used them, but face downward.

I have said that John never learned to play, but once in a defiant preface to a speech he revealed a secret.

"In my youthful and unregenerate days I used to play a game called bean poker, and there I learned to raise the ante and call the bluff ; and that is what I am going to do right now."

When I first went into his office I undertook to write speeches for him, but he would have none of it, considering, quite justly, that his own compositions were superior. In fact, he generally preferred to go without any preparation.

"Talking is my long suit," he told the House once. "Tired ? I'm not tired. I could talk on this all night."

When he wanted help in preparation he laid down the lines.

"I don't want any laboured composition. Dig up the facts and figures and I'll make my own speech."

And he did not always deign to use the notes I prepared. He was called upon to address the Daughters of the Empire on a celebration of the birthday of Sir James Douglas. He told me to get some particulars on the career of Douglas. I did so and had them typed. He took them with him to the gathering of ladies held in the Empress Hotel.

When he mounted the platform and started to speak he held out the notes I had prepared.

"Here is some stuff that my secretary has written," he announced, "but I'm not going to talk about that. I'd rather talk about you."

In this he was wise, as he could tell them nothing about Douglas they did not already know ; but as several of his descendants were among the audience he patted the back of their family pride and made an excellent impression.

On one other occasion he made some remarks which I am sure I never helped him to prepare.

He had delivered an address to the Merchants' Exchange in Vancouver, and at the close they gave him a vote of thanks.

He received it with a deprecatory wave of the hand. "Oh, that's all right. You needn't thank me. This is what I'm paid for doing and I like my job. It's the best-paid job I ever had, and I mean to hang on to it as long as I honestly can."

"Do you want that reported?" asked the chairman, who could hardly take him seriously.

"Why sure," said John, "let the boys write it all down." And they did. He told me of this on his return, and chuckled as he did so. "Why shouldn't I tell the truth about it?" he explained. "I do like the job. I'm well paid for it, I'm strong enough to stand it, and I think I can do it just as well as anyone else."

While John was blessed with a marvellous memory and matchless power of analysis I used to think him rather deficient in imagination. Poetry and the finer forms of romance and literature never appealed to him. His reading was confined to newspapers and blue-books and such things as bore upon his work, and if he read for recreation at all he found it, like Bismarck, in detective stories that would be considered trash from a literary point of view.

"I get such a kick out of them," he told a friend.

I suppose that his passion for analysis found some gratification in the unravelling of intricate plots. At times, however, gleams of the divine fire sprang out of the ashes of neglect ; and apt quotations that might be of future use flew to his mind and clung there like steel filings to a magnet.

He was called upon to address a gathering of local Americans on a centenary of the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers. John was no student of history and instructed me to get him some data about it. I consulted an encyclopædia and wrote out for him a description of the *Mayflower*, its size and tonnage, the number of the passengers and the condition of their landing at Plymouth Rock. That was sufficient. It would have been of no use giving him "Mrs. Hemans," since poetry from John would have been as unexpected as Handel's "Largo" played on a merry-go-round.

Out of the scant material I supplied him he made a remarkable speech. He pictured the small band of pilgrims tossed about day after day on the waves of the stormy Atlantic; told of the cramped living quarters and unsanitary conditions of shipboard life in those days of salt junk and hard tack, and wound up with a graphic picture of their landing to carve homes out of the wild woods on a barren shore. He moralized on this sacrifice for faith and principle, and congratulated his hearers on an ancestry of such sterling type.

When he was called upon to address a convention of the Canadian Manufacturers Association in Vancouver, he appeared to have a dry subject. He faced a crowd of well-dressed, prosperous men from all parts of the Dominion, who were engaged in the manufacture of everything from a safety-pin to a threshing machine. John admitted that what he did not know about manufacturing would fill a very big book, but continued :

"I remember reading the story of Creation as recorded in the Scriptures, and how after that work was completed by the placing of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, they discovered that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made aprons. I wondered if that was the beginning of manufacturing in this world. I presume that the aprons were all right for the summer, because I read that shortly after coats were made of skins and they were clothed. Now the instance mentioned shows us that the manufacture of clothing is of ancient origin, and I remark, that with all the advancement of the centuries, the use of skins for clothing appears to be as popular as ever.

"My next thought is that after the expulsion of our forefather and foremother from Eden, the ground was cursed and the production of thorns and thistles was ordained, and we read that the

firstborn of men was a tiller of the ground. We are left to imagine what those primitive implements of production were like, but we know something of the effects, for we have a mental picture of the man Cain contending with bare hands with the thorns and thistles, using a broken pointed stick to prod the earth into productiveness with the sweat of his brow blotting his eyesight. I must confess I have thought the poor fellow must have been subject to a great deal of provocation before he killed his brother.

"My thoughts turn back to the time of my childhood, and I see men working in the lead mines of Derbyshire drilling the rock by hand and using black powder as an explosive. Then I turn to the air compressor and machine drills of to-day with the nitro compounds and other high explosives in general use, as an illustration of the changes made by the advancement of science and the perfection of labour-saving devices.

"Again, I see a field of grain ready for the harvest—a man with a scythe mows the grain into a swath, a boy follows and makes a band from a portion of the new-cut grain. He lays it on the ground, a man or woman follows, and with bare hands and arms gathers the swath of grain into a bundle, places it on the band prepared by the boy, and still another man or woman follows and ties the band around the bundle, when it becomes a sheaf of grain. An acre or an acre and a quarter a day for four persons. By the intervention of labour-saving machinery the same result is now obtained in one hour.

"We live in an age of rapid evolution and continual change—we have seen accomplished the things we deemed impossible, and not only so, but we have seen the accomplishment once deemed impossible superseded by something which seemed more impossible still."

The speech contained much more and was received with acclaim. Audiences always had a liking for John's picturesque personality and homely wit and wisdom. I remember seeing one picture of him addressing the Board of Trade in Montreal with guests in evening dress staring up at him and smiling as he declared :

"I'm rather out of my element among all these compliments you pay me. Where I come from I'm more used to the brick-bats, and when I can heave a good one back I rather like it."

SCENE 61. PROHIBITION AND BEER

IN the first session that followed his re-election John was confronted by a peculiar position. The House was evenly divided between Liberals on the one side and Conservatives and Independents on the other, so that when the Speaker was counted out of the Government ranks they would be in a minority of one against the combined vote of the rest of the House. But there was little danger of such a combination. Two or three of the Independents were decidedly favourable to the Government, and none of the others was strongly opposed.

John stated his position in the first speech of the session. He had no doubt of the ability of the Government to carry on. At the same time he added :

“ I want to warn the House here and now that there is a price I will not pay for the sake of keeping in office.”

H. D. Twigg, Conservative member for Victoria, wittily taunted him :

“ There you sit by the grace of God and the Labour Party and the member for Alberni.”

The last was the witty and irrepressible Dick Burde, whom he styled “ the uncrowned king.” John, however, did not always see eye to eye with his crownless majesty. Burde represented a labouring constituency, and was often introducing Bills and amendments to limit the hours of labour or keep up wages. John considered some of these premature and openly opposed them, which caused Burde to remark :

“ The Premier calls himself a Liberal, but he is only one by accident. When he came to this country he happened to fall on that side of the fence, and has stayed there ever since, but at heart he is the greatest old Tory in British Columbia.”

At other times he admitted that he had a good deal of admiration for “ that sturdy old gentleman,” and when it came to vital divisions he was almost invariably on his side.

In one matter that arose in the session of 1924 John and he were strangely assorted bedfellows. About the time of the election of 1920 a referendum had been submitted to the people

asking if they approved the sale of liquor under Government control as opposed to the Prohibition law that had sprung out of the war years. By an overwhelming majority a mandate for Government sale was given.

John had voted for prohibition, but after watching its operation for two or three years stated his conclusion in a public speech :

“ I have never been drunk in my life and am no friend of the liquor traffic, but I have lived long enough to know that prohibition cannot be enforced in British Columbia in the present state of public feeling.”

For this he was sharply assailed by the standpat prohibitionists, and his opinion was quoted in an election campaign against his own nephew in old Ontario. There he had one political family successor, Farquhar Oliver, the youngest candidate in a provincial election. Farquhar supported the prohibition cause, and was rather disconcerted to find his distinguished uncle's opinion quoted against him on billboards and fences throughout the rural constituency he was contesting. He was elected in spite of it, and there was no ill feeling between uncle and nephew on that account.

Even under prohibition the British Columbia Government had found it necessary to conduct stores where liquor might be purchased for medical purposes under doctors' prescriptions. This system led to wide abuse. Toward Christmas especially it looked as if an epidemic of colds and colics had struck the country like a plague. In Vancouver queues a quarter of a mile long could be seen waiting their turn to enter the liquor stores to get prescriptions filled. Hindus, Chinese, and Japanese varied the lines of the afflicted of many races. It was a kaleidoscopic procession waiting in the rain for a replenishment that would drive the chills away ; and it was alleged that several doctors needed a little alcoholic liniment to soothe the writer's cramp caused by inditing their signatures at two dollars per line.

All this, combined with bootlegging and moonshine whisky, made prohibition a laughing-stock for the jesters and provided its opponents with abundant ammunition. A “ Moderation

League " (whose attitude and language in reference to prohibition was anything but moderate) was formed and soon made rapid headway. The prohibitionists were unable to prohibit them. Their ardour was dampened as with the cold water they advocated; their dream of a liquorless and sinless world was obscured in clouds of controversy, and for the time they were utterly routed.

The sale of liquor under Government control was confined to sealed bottles dispensed over the counters of the Government liquor stores, but there was a strong demand for the sale of beer by the open glass in such districts as might desire it, and at the election of 1924 the Government submitted the question to a referendum vote. There was a popular majority of about 1,300 against the beer parlours in the entire province, with the majority of the smaller electoral districts in its favour. Vancouver gave a small majority for beer sale and Victoria voted decisively against.

When the matter came before the Legislature John felt himself in a difficult position. At heart a prohibitionist and opposed to the extension of the sale of beer, he felt that as Premier he could not vote against the right of local option in districts which had voted for beer in the referendum submitted on that understanding. When he rose to speak his inward desires and his sense of public duty fought within him. To the outer world it seemed of no great importance, but the struggle tore his soul. His speech was choked and his eyes were dimmed as he declared that he would have to vote for the establishment of beer parlours in districts that desired them, though he added.

"I have never cast a more reluctant vote in my life."

In the division that followed party affiliations were cut asunder and local option for beer parlours was carried. Thus was another dream of a beerless and tearless world shattered in a harsh awakening, and John naturally received a large share of the blame.

SCENE 62. WAYSIDE COURTESIES

AFTER that first session of the new Parliament things began to come John's way again, and it looked as if he would emerge triumphantly from the clouds that had lowered over the election of 1924. The main decision in the freight rates campaign had been won. Henceforth he left this matter almost entirely in the hands of Mr. McGeer, while he devoted himself to securing the return of eleven million acres of railway lands from the Dominion to the province.

John had never been on better terms with his opponents than in this, his last tenure of office. He and Mr. Pooley, their House leader, remained always good personal friends. Two other of his opponents for whom he had a warm liking were J. H. Schofield, the veteran member for Trail, and Archie McDonald, whom Dick Burde dubbed "the silent wonder from Lilloot." Schofield in twenty years' membership had spoken very rarely, and McDonald not at all, though one sarcastic scribe once pictured him as remonstrating with his fellow-members :

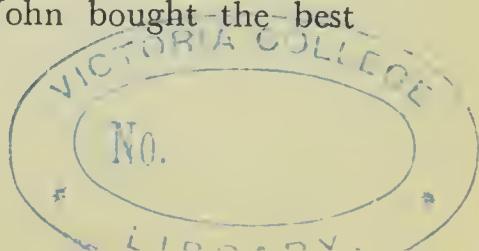
"Said Archie McDonald, 'Don't holler so loud.
God knows I can make enough noise for the crowd.'"

In fact, the spacious silences of these two good committee workers matched the length of John's speeches, and as a good talker loves a good listener this may have been the secret of his liking.

Another of John's friendly opponents was Leon Ladner, Conservative member of the Federal House for South Vancouver. He was a nephew of the Bill Ladner whose cow John had rescued from the creek years before, and so there was a traditional connection between them.

In fact, more than one of John's opponents would call upon him, and they were always welcome to partake of the box of cigars or packet of cigarettes he offered the smokers or of the apples and peppermints given indiscriminately to all.

Invariably during the apple season John bought the best



Okanagans by the box, nor did he require the assistance of any porter to get them into the office. He would pick them up in his car as he came down through the city in the morning, and when he got to the buildings would hoist the forty-pound box on his shoulder and come marching in with it as easily and proudly as if it had been one of his own grandchildren. In that respect at least he showed no failing of strength. He still liked to do things for himself, even to carrying apples to the office or his bags from the boat. Once in a while he would leave a grip to be carried up by an old bent-up negro, known to everyone as "Joe," who hung around the waterfront.

"Give Joe a quarter," was his direction as he went into his office and straight to work as was his wont, whether returning from an overnight trip to Vancouver or a four weeks' visit to Ottawa. As a rule from his longer journeys he almost invariably returned a day or two in advance of his schedule. His punctuality was so unpunctual that he was usually in advance of appointments.

There was an interval between John's latest victory on freight rates and the beginning of his fight for the return of the railway lands when he was less busy than usual and found time for the exercise of many little courtesies.

One day, as he entered the Parliament Buildings, he saw an elderly American couple gazing around. They spoke to him asking if they could get anyone to show them through the buildings.

"Sure, I'll do that with pleasure," said John. Straightway he led them up the stairs and showed them the Legislative Chamber with its richly carpeted floor and panelled walls and oil-paintings of the King and Queen. He also piloted them through the spacious library with its marble-walled centre, and explained to them the meaning of certain pictures on the walls.

The lady expressed a desire to climb to the cupola at the top of the buildings. This can be reached only by climbing a narrow, winding stone staircase through a darkened passage such as might have led to the donjon keep of some old castle.

The lady was of generous proportions, and when John looked at her he shook his head. "I'm afraid you'd be like me," he remarked. "You'd have to do some pretty tight squeezing. It's

only about this wide." And when he indicated the space with his hands the lady decided not to make the attempt.

"Who was the nice old gentleman who showed us around," she inquired at the door as she left the building.

"That was Mr. Oliver, the Premier of the Province," said the doorkeeper.

"My, but he's awfully nice—for a Premier," said the lady, with which doubtful compliment to John's position they left the buildings.

In the touring season he had not a few indiscriminate callers from pure curiosity, but if he did not happen to be too busy he would see them all. There came in two elderly spinster sisters from a small town in Missouri. They entered my office rather timidly, and one of them inquired anxiously if they might see the Premier. She said they had come all the way from the southern States, and they would like to see the big man of British Columbia.

I went in and presented their request to John, who replied heartily :

"Sure. Show them in, I'll be glad to see them."

In a few minutes they returned gushing with pleasure. "He was real nice to us, and we are so glad to have met him," one of them said ; and I have no doubt they would go back to Blankville, Mo., and tell all their friends of the visit to the big, white-haired man who sat in the Premier's chair in the stately Parliament Buildings of the beautiful capital of British Columbia.

Of many of his distinguished visitors I caught but fleeting impressions. Neville Chamberlain came through one day, but all I saw in passing was a tallish rather good-looking man, with a black moustache. Sir Henry Thornton came in cheery and smiling all over his big, powerful personality and ruddy face :

"Can I see the Premier ? Thornton's the name." He need not have told me ; he had been sufficiently pictured.

When Sir George Foster was visiting Victoria he called in. Two men more dissimilar in appearance never met. Sir George scrawnily thin and primly tall ; John with his barrel-like bulk that appeared to diminish his medium height. But they had some things in common. Both wore a short, trimmed beard and both had been temperance enthusiasts in their day. John was in

my office when Sir George, despite his fourscore years, tripped in as gaily as a stripling.

"Well, Sir George," said John, holding out his hand, "I'm glad to see you. Come right in." And they had a long chat together.

Mackenzie King and John were in almost constant communication about something. There was the eternal conflict over the rights of the Dominion and the province, and John often found himself at variance with the Federal chief. He went to Ottawa and thumped the Premier's desk, but they remained good personal friends. Indeed, as I shall have occasion to show, Mackenzie King had a profound admiration for John's rugged character and native ability.

On one occasion John entertained E. C. Drury, the former Premier of Ontario, who had come west with his Minister of Public Works. John did not like Independents and Third Party men, but he appeared to have a fellow-feeling with Mr. Drury, for whom he expressed warm admiration. It may have been because they were both of the Cincinnatus type and had been drawn from the plough to serve the State. In fact, just about that time farmer-Premiers predominated in the provincial politics of Canada. They reigned in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, while a professor from an agricultural college headed the Government of Manitoba. In the vicissitudes of life and politics the "dirt farmers" have long since left their posts, and only the Professor of Agriculture remains.

The Hon. S. M. Bruce, the youthful-looking and ruddy-faced Premier of Australia, was another of John's guests, and was given the singular honour of addressing the members of the Legislature on the floor of the House.

There was one occasion when John's courteous praise of a distinguished visitor fell on deaf ears. This visitor was Marshal Joffre, the father of the French Army. Joffre was getting very old, and to an imperfect knowledge of English added the further impediment of a partial deafness. In contradistinction to French vivacity he appeared to be rather torpid and phlegmatic.

It was John's duty to welcome him on behalf of the province at a banquet tendered at the Empress Hotel. Bruce Hutchison, the

well-known Victoria newspaperman, who is also a skilful caricaturist, drew a sketch of John with front protruding, hair a-bristle, and spectacles on nose, holding forth with extended left arm and right hand in pocket while the Marshal munched away at the table beneath him.

I cannot do better than relate the incident, as nearly as I can remember, in Mr. Hutchison's own words :

"To-day," said the Premier, "we are honoured in having as our guest the man on whom the fate of Europe, and of civilization itself, rested a few years ago."

The Marshal munched a piece of bread.

"We are glad to honour the man who turned back the German forces at the battle of the Marne——"

The Marshal swallowed the potato he had been holding poised on the end of his fork.

"And are proud of this opportunity of greeting the papa of the French Armies."

The Marshal sipped his coffee.

John laughed when I pointed this story out to him as it appeared in the Press. "That's pretty good, that is," he remarked.

SCENE 63. THE GENERAL'S "LETTER"

FOLLOWING the election of 1924 General McRae's Provincial Party disbanded. It was true they had only elected three out of forty-five candidates, but they claimed to have accomplished the purpose expressed in their slogan. They had "put Oliver out" for a few weeks at least, and they had certainly not "let Bowser in." Thus far satisfied the majority among them returned to the Conservative fold, to which they had formerly belonged, and not least among the homeward-bound sheep was General McRae himself; but this did not dispel John's pugnacity, and he was ready for the first opportunity of hunting him again.

The General was apparently welcomed home gladly, and in the Dominion election two years later he was nominated as Conservative candidate for North Vancouver. Spice was added to the campaign in that his opponent on the Liberal side was G. G.

McGeer, of freight rates fame. McGeer's managing committee, however, did not appear very anxious to avail themselves of John's eager offer to "go after McRae." Evidently they were afraid of what he might say in his emotional vehemence. They compromised by assigning him a meeting in the paper-making town of Powell River, which is included in the North Vancouver constituency.

John had been warned and went to Powell River resolved to dissect the General's career with an ice-pick, but as he proceeded the pick got warmer and at last became red-hot. The fire was fanned by the heckling of McRae's supporters, who were there in force at the back of the hall.

"I have no wish," said John at the outset, "to make a speech of abuse about General McRae to-night, but he is before you as a candidate for election, and I feel it to be my duty to state the truth so that you may be in a position to judge. Every cent I have is behind the statements I make here to-night. If you can show a single statement I am making to be false I will turn around and vote for the Conservative Party at the next election."

So far he was calm and judicial, but just then someone taunted him with an incident in connection with the Pacific Great Eastern Railway inquiry which the Government considered had been satisfactorily concluded.

"What about the burned books?" asked a heckler.

"Ask General McRae?" was the counter-question.

"You burned them," said the heckler.

"You lie," retorted John warmly.

"What about Sumas?" was the next question.

By this time John was warmed up.

"If you want to discuss that question you can hire a hall for the purpose. For my part I came here to-night to discuss political questions in connection with this campaign and no hiring of General McRae is going to prevent me."

Paper is very inflammable, and in the course of his dissection of the General, John found it so. He held out a typewritten sheet before the audience.

"I have here a letter given me when I reached Powell River to-night, and I say to you that General McRae, among

his other peculiar peccadilloes, is defrauding the revenue of Canada by sending his campaign literature free through the mail."

"That isn't true. Be fair," said a voice.

John repeated that it was a letter from General McRae addressed "Mr. Voter," and he was informed that it bore no stamp and there was nothing to indicate that it had been paid in advance.

John made a vigorous speech that night, but he had not heard the last of the letter incident. About two days later he received a letter from the Post-office Inspector for the district, advising him that the said letters were printed or multigraphed, and were sent out in bundles prepaid in the bulk, and that they were within the post-office regulations.

This worried John a little, and when I got to the office the following morning, I found him busy looking up post-office guides and postal laws. At last he struck something. He promptly wrote the Post-office Inspector that General McRae's communication was not a circular addressed to "Householder" as the law permitted, but a letter addressed "Mr. Voter," that it was marked on the envelope "Letter No. 1," and the writer said inside "I send you this letter." Therefore it came clearly within the rules requiring letter postage. The postal authorities did not accept this interpretation, but it satisfied John, and he chuckled to himself.

"I think I got out of that pretty well," he remarked, all smiles. "They can't tie me up in a knot that easily."

However, when election day came, Major Gus Lyons, one of the Conservative members for Victoria, a good friend of John, and, like him, much of a humorist, rang up the office and inquired for the Premier. I informed him that he was out.

"All right. Will you tell him when he comes in we have a car ready to take him to the polls to vote for Dr. Tolmie as he promised."

This was in reference to the statement that he would vote Conservative if they could prove any of his statements untrue. I told John of the message when he came in. He laughed :

"I guess it's too late, I've voted already." He did not say

how he had voted, but I have a suspicion that it was not for Dr. Tolmie. In fact, he appeared to be convinced that he had satisfactorily exonerated himself in connection with the campaign letter, and I do not think his opponents took the matter very seriously. Moreover, they were mollified by the fact that, in spite of John's efforts (they even intimated because of them), General McRae was elected by a substantial majority.

The incident was dealt with in the *Vancouver Province* in an editorial entitled "Apples and Peppermints," on the strength of the story that John had given up eating his favourite candies in favour of McIntosh Red apples. The editorial read in part :

"It is a good thing, for we suspect that it was under the influence of peppermints that he [the Premier] had gone into the North Vancouver fight, and we can quite understand why General McRae for instance should rise and declare blessed the names of all peppermint makers. But we are more magnanimous. We should not dare to offer Jerry McGeer a peppermint. Also we suspect that it was under the influence of those peppermints that Premier Oliver wrote all those letters to the papers. More things are wrought by peppermints than by McIntosh Reds, but we do not think they are better things."

It always appeared to me that John was not sufficiently grateful to General McRae, because it was doubtless due to his intervention that the Oliver Government had been saved at the last election. In fact, as my friend John Nelson wrote in *MacLean's Magazine*, General McRae was "the man who upset the B.C. Apple Cart," which may have accounted in part for John's conversion to the consumption of McIntosh Reds.

Of the two "Macs" he preferred the apple.

SCENE 64. MOTION OF CENSURE

THERE were occasions when, on John's return from his Ottawa trips, he was annoyed by things that had happened while he was away. But his colleagues had always a good explanation to give, and he made the best of it.

One of these troubles arose over the building of the University of British Columbia at Point Grey, Vancouver. The students had formerly been housed in some old hospital buildings in the city and, following insistent demands, the Government undertook to build new quarters on the university site. There was some misapprehension as to the amount of money available for the work at a certain stage, and in the way of buildings they ate up far more than was anticipated. It was suggested that this and that building would be incomplete unless a room were added there and equipment installed elsewhere. Here a touch and there a touch until when the buildings were completed, it was found that more than a million dollars in excess of the amount allotted by the Legislature had been spent.

When this was brought to John's attention on his return from an eastern trip, he placed the situation squarely before Lieutenant-Governor Nichol, and asked him at his discretion to authorize Special Warrants to raise the extra money. The Lieutenant-Governor agreed to sanction the borrowing of half a million dollars, but no more. This did not cover payments due to the contractors, and in order that they might carry on and complete the work John wrote them on behalf of the Government, giving his assurance that the money would be paid as soon as the Legislature could meet and sanction it.

This raised a storm in the Conservative press and the Opposition ranks. John was accused of overstepping his authority and disregarding the limit of payment laid down by the Lieutenant-Governor, and altogether acting unconstitutionally. It was the occasion of an all-night sitting of the Legislature at the next session.

When the estimates were being considered the Conservatives moved that the appropriation for John's salary be struck out as a

mark of disapproval of his "unconstitutional conduct." Discussing it at an evening sitting, Mr. Pooley, the Opposition leader, was decidedly emphatic, and stressed his denunciation with a resounding whack on his desk.

"Don't do that. You'll break the desk," protested a Scottish member with regard to economy in furniture.

Mr. Pooley straightened up and waved his hands indignantly in the air. "I'll break the desk, and I'll break something else before I get through. I'll break this Government. I'm after big game to-night."

And like the good sportsman he was, he led the hunt with a "tallyho and away." But the game proved wary and elusive, and though the chase was kept up from eight in the evening till four o'clock the next morning, the quarry evaded the huntsmen.

John showed little of his old pugnacity. He simply defended his conduct, and contented himself with declaring the motion "silly and a waste of time." Indeed, he seemed to be rather weary of it all, and in the early hours of morning was observed nodding in his chair. Some members slept in their seats, and others munched chocolate bars and apples to satisfy their hunger and keep themselves awake. It is not recorded that John was even seen to grind a peppermint in his mouth, a sure sign that his interest was not very keen.

Among others wearied of the discussion was Major "Dick" Burde, of Alberni, who rose at about half-past three in the morning and threatened to stand and talk there till six o'clock or later if they did not close the matter up.

He provided himself with imposing-looking volumes to talk from, and the members knew that he would be as good as his word, so the hunt was called off and a vote taken, with the result that John was supported by 29 to 18, every Independent member, with one exception, rallying to his side.

"The poor old man wants the money," observed Dick Burde. "Let him have it."

The session was marked by one social event worthy of notice. The Legislature of the neighbouring State of Washington was also in session at Olympia, and on the invitation of Speaker Buckham,

a large delegation of them came over to Victoria one week-end to witness the proceedings of our legislators.

John, in welcoming them, remarked that it was a unique occasion, fit to rank with the visit paid a year or two before by President Harding, as it was the first of its kind, and he hoped it would not be the last. After all Americans and Canadians came of common stock, and the inspiration for the laws of both countries came from the old common law of England.

The visitors sat on the floor of the House, and, fresh from the republican simplicity of their surroundings, must have viewed with interest proceedings in which old formalities were observed ; where the Speaker's three-cornered cap and the mace on the Speaker's table took them back to the days of Cromwell and the Stuart kings. As one of them observed : " It's very interesting, but it wouldn't go with us."

SCENE 65. THE RAILWAY LANDS

ANOTHER session over, John buckled down to the task of securing from the Dominion the return to the province of the Railway Lands and the Peace River Block. These comprised a strip of twenty miles on each side the Canadian Pacific Railway on its main line through the province, aggregating some 11,000,000 acres, and a solid block of 3,500,000 acres of the best land in the Peace River section of British Columbia. At the time of Confederation the railway lands had been assigned by the province to the Dominion Government to be used in aiding the building of the railway to the Pacific Coast. At a later date the Peace River land had been turned over to the Dominion as compensation for land already alienated in the railway belt of the province.

These land grants had been part of John's case for the equalization of freight rates. He was firmly convinced that they had been given under a misapprehension, that they had not been used for the purpose for which they were intended, and the province was entitled to their return. It was by no means a new contention. The McBride Government had taken it up years before,

as part of their claim for a general readjustment of conditions between the Dominion and the province, under the title of "Better Terms," but the war halted proceedings.

John took the matter up where they left off, but in a different way. He was the last man in the world to accept anything at second hand. He may have read the brief prepared by the former Government, but I never saw it in his hands or heard him refer to it. I remember that, during the freight rates campaign, he instructed me to go through it and see what reference it had to that subject, from which I inferred that it had struck no chord in his inescapable memory. Apart from that he did not believe in dealing with grievances in the mass. He liked to take one phase at a time, dispose of it, and proceed to the next. As one wrote who knew him well :

" In battle strong, in counsel wise,
He grasped the task that came to view.
He chased no meteor in the skies,
But did the thing he found to do."

" One thing at a time," was his rule.

This question of the lands he had tried to bring before a Conference of the Dominion and Provincial Premiers at Ottawa in 1919, but Mr. Meighen, the Canadian Prime Minister at the time, had ruled it out as not being on the agenda. John felt rather aggrieved about this.

" Meighen's a clever fellow all right," he told me once, " but he and I don't pull. I locked horns with him once."

He referred to the Conference, and John never liked a locking of horns in which he was compelled to retreat. What finally drove him to resume it was the conclusion he had reached in the course of his investigation of the freight rates question, and I think also that the Conservative Opposition, by their motions in the Legislature, spurred him on. In spite of attempts to make political capital out of it for either side, both parties at heart were behind him, and, as John himself stated, the question was too big for party difference.

As was his manner he went down to the roots. Again, as in the freight rates case, there was much reading of musty tomes, and

this time we went back to the old Vanconver Island colony, and read debates and discussions on Confederation years before it actually took place. We lived for a time in an age when the crinolines of the ladies were as wide as the pantaloons of the men were tight—an age of full beards, side whiskers, and top hats. It was an age of long sentences, long speeches, and romantic names. We read the discourses of Amor de Cosmos that “lover of the world” who yet held with Tennyson :

“ That man’s the true cosmopolite
Who loves his native country best.”

Not that British Columbia was his native country, but he had lived so long in it that it seemed so. His pictures showed him with handsome face, long beard, and lofty brow—a figure as romantic as his name. He was an ardent Confederationist. More doubtful of the merits of union was Dr. J. S. Helmcken, who had passed to his rest at the age of ninety-six, but a short time before John began his labours on the case. A white-bearded, stooped old man, with cane and walking-stick, he was seen around the Parliament Buildings hale and hearty in the years that almost spanned a century—a lone, snow-capped peak from a bygone age still standing above the waves in the advancing tide of Time. He had opposed Confederation as an unripe scheme. There were the names of Douglas, Trutch, Blanshard, and others, long since gone to their reward. Indeed, we might have exclaimed with Southey :

“ My thoughts are with the dead, with them
I live in long past years.”

Then John turned again to the debates on Confederation in the Dominion House of Commons, and once more raked over the speeches of Macdonald, Brown, Tupper, Galt, and Cartier, and all the old fathers of the nation. He then compared the treatment of British Columbia with that accorded to other provinces. He noted with the delight of the controversialist the points where performance fell short of promise, and bringing it up to date, completed his task.

Having satisfied himself of the completeness of his claim, he

embodied it in a memorandum which he had printed and sent to every member of the Dominion Parliament. From a journalistic point of view that was a fearsome document. I was in favour of entitling it "British Columbia's Claim for the Return of the Railway Lands and the Peace River Block," but that was not legal enough for John, who had imprinted on the cover :

MEMORANDUM

Respecting the Claim of British Columbia for a Reconveyance to the Province by the Government of Canada of the Lands conveyed by the Province to the Dominion in Sequence to Paragraph II of the Terms of Union

or

Such other Equitable adjustment as an Unbiased Investigation of the Claims of British Columbia would entitle British Columbia to receive from the Government of Canada

Prepared by

HONOURABLE JOHN OLIVER

Premier of British Columbia

John evidently considered this title-page as legal and dignified and worthy of the subject, but it appeared to me that its dignity was marred by the arrangement of the matter inside. It consisted of a bald statement of the case, supplemented by quotations from the speeches of the Fathers of Confederation and of Statutes bearing upon it, and he directed that all the passages he wished to emphasize should be printed in BIG ROUND CAPITAL LETTERS. In consequence it looked like a junior school primer or a lesson for a class afflicted with myopia.

John apparently regarded the Federal authorities as myopic on this question, and was determined that the blind should see. He sent a copy to every member of the Legislature and of the Dominion Parliament, and also to Lieutenant-Governors and Premiers throughout the Dominion. He received many courteous

notes of acceptance and thanks, but I feared that it might be ranked with Shakespeare and the classics, in that, though the admirers were many the readers were few.

John did not confine himself to stating his case in printed form. He spoke on the subject at every opportunity, whether addressing a Rotary Club or a gathering of his political followers. As in the freight rates case, he spread the gospel of "Return the Lands" far and wide, and at the next Session of the Legislature appealed, not unsuccessfully, for all parties to stand behind him.

It was in speaking on this subject that he made a rather nice reference to Dr. Tolmie, who was later to succeed him in the Premiership.

At a convention in Kamloops Dr. Tolmie, after much persuasion, had been induced to take the leadership of the Conservative Party in succession to Mr. Bowser, who in a speech of farewell had gracefully waived his own claims.

Dr. Tolmie's elevation was the death-knell of the Liberal Government when the next election should come. Under his genial and popular leadership the Conservatives knit up their divided ranks and moved forward toward sweeping victory, but the consummation was not yet. In the meantime Dr. Tolmie held his seat at Ottawa, where he was also Dominion organizer for the Conservative Party, and it was to this position that John referred in a debate on the railway lands.

He told the House that he agreed with Dr. Tolmie that they wanted stable legislation, not horse-stable or cow-stable, but legislation with stability. He thought they had too much legislation, and that their time would be better occupied in repealing some old laws than in passing new ones.

"I have great respect for Dr. Tolmie," he observed, "and now that we have been told by the Opposition that he is going to remain in Ottawa I am looking forward to his co-operation."

"I am sure you will get it," said Mr. Twigg, himself an ardent proponent of Better Terms, though, as in duty bound, as a good party man he differed from John as to method.

"Well, the race is not always to the swift," replied John

mysteriously. "You have heard of the tortoise and the hare. In this case I bet on the hare."

Asked which was the tortoise and which the hare, John had to admit that neither he nor Dr. Tolmie bore much resemblance to either, and least of all to the hare.

From my knowledge of these two men I always felt that had they known each other better they would have liked each other well. Both had undergone the same early rural training, both were instinctively lovers of the out-of-doors, both had an unfailing sense of humour, both had great innate sympathy and kindness, and both applied themselves conscientiously to the duties of the high office to which they were called. But the accident of politics kept them apart.

In this matter of the railway areas John was to prove the Moscs to bring his people in sight of the promised lands, but Dr. Tolmie was the Joshua who finally secured possession. John continued the fight until failing health compelled him to desist, but by that time he had already secured from Ottawa a promise of a Commission to investigate the claim.

The Commissioner appointed was Mr. Justice Martin, a former Premier of Saskatchewan. He conducted the hearing when John was absent through illness, but his Attorney-General, Mr. Manson, energetically carried the case of the province on. It came to a successful conclusion with a statement from the Commissioner that, while the province had no legal claim to the lands, there was a moral and equitable right for their return, and he recommended that it be made. By this time John had reached Nebo's mountain, but the record of his good works followed him.

SCENE 66. ON WITH THE DANCE

BETWEEN trips to Ottawa, speeches to Canadian, Rotary, and Kiwanis Clubs and political gatherings, and his fight for the Railway Lands of which these were part, John managed to find some time for social duties, in which I think he took greater pleasure as the years rolled by.

He was often invited by Lieutenant-Governor Bruce to dine

with distinguished visitors at Government House. There he met the Marquis of Salisbury, son of a distinguished Premier of Great Britain, and himself leader of the Conservatives in the House of Lords. He was the very essence and type of the British aristocrat, and represented all to which John was opposed, but they seemed to have got on well together.

"Yes, he is a son of the old Marquis," he told me, "and is no fool at that. He is a good type of the old country statesman."

He always liked to meet his old neighbours of the Delta District, and gladly responded to an invitation to join a reunion of the "old timers" at Ladner. He had, however, a rather trying experience when he was persuaded to lead off the grand march with the wife of his old friend A. D. Paterson, the member for the district. John led off smiling, his bulky form providing an ample wake for all who followed him; but when he got into the mazes of the dance he was like a derelict freighter on a troubled sea, with the smaller craft around him dodging here and there to avoid collision. The "ladies chain" and "gents to the right and ladies to the left" were too much for him. His breaths became longer as his steps became shorter, elephantiasis seized upon his legs and feet—they seemed to get in everybody's way and to have grown to dimensions larger than his ample front. At last he was extricated, and, perspiring and breathless, sat down to recover while the rural orchestra soothed him with the strains of "Little Annie Rooney" and "A bicycle built for two."

Many smiles (and perhaps a few sore toes) rewarded his terpsichorean effort, and he was not displeased when someone remarked:

"I guess, John, you are better at leading Governments than leading dances."

At the supper that followed he was called upon to speak, and there was quite at home. He recalled the joys of pioneering among them—of taking a bit of the wilderness and projecting the vision that could see it as the cultivated field producing abundantly for years to come. While the generation he addressed would miss the hardships of pioneering, they would also lose its recompense. They would, however, find work at hand to do, for the responsi-

bility of life never changed. He warned them that any worldly possessions they might obtain would not compare with the happiness of a mind content with work well done.

John was mellowing with age—becoming less pugnacious and also less physically active. Ten years of inside work and intense mental concentration were telling on a man nurtured in the out-of-doors. The ingrained hearty appetite of sixty years in the open was not easily mastered in the last decade of ordinary life. The fat accumulated and the muscles softened, nor was the tendency counteracted by any physical exercise. He rode in his car to his office at morning, noon, and night, and journeyed home in the same manner. He felt he had no time to spare for walking or for outdoor exercise. Occasionally he did a little work in the garden, but I judge that it was not extensive. His remarkable constitution bore well under the strain until his seventieth year. Then there began to be signs of shortness of breath, twinges of neuritis and little pains that stabbed here and there, but not seriously as yet.

John was aware that his strength was failing and he put a curb on his appetite. Less than a pound of meat a week and vegetables in proportion sufficed for that part of the menu. It was about the time of the highest popularity of the orange-juice diet preached by Dr. McCoy, of Los Angeles, and John tried it in part. For a while he would eat about a dozen oranges a day in substitution for other food. He declared that he felt better for it, but I am not aware that he maintained it permanently. However, he was more careful of his diet henceforth, and for a time his health improved. He was really a sufferer from his conscientious application to duty. He still ate, drank, and slept politics, and made it the breath of his life.

I noticed that as he grew older he lost some of his old-time cocksure one-sidedness. Addressing a Liberal convention at Nelson he observed :

“ We come of good old British stock, and, while no Government can attain the maximum of perfection, we shall manage to muddle through in the good old British way.”

Addressing the Liberal Association of Victoria at that time he said :

“ Looking back over ten years of office I am surprised that we got off with making so few mistakes. No Government is perfect, neither are you.”

While he had never been an enthusiast for social legislation, he seemed satisfied with some of its effects, for he said :

“ Thank God for the Workmen’s Compensation and Mothers’ Pension Acts. The benefits of these two pieces of legislation cannot be described in words.”

He received at this time an unexpected honour from a visiting American battleship. Admiral Robison, who commanded, had called on John at the office, and invited him to visit the ship. John went to the dock with the Lieutenant-Governor, and they were surprised as they stepped aboard by a salute with a boom of guns.

I may say here that John’s relations with the American people had always been most cordial. He had long lived near the boundary and had business with many of them, which caused him to remark to some who called at the office one day :

“ Some people talk as if Americans were essentially different from ourselves, but for my part I can’t see how an artificial boundary-line can make any difference in human nature.”

It annoyed him to see titles and honours going to persons who had merely distinguished themselves by getting rich. Addressing the Canadian Medical Association once and speaking of the value of the doctors’ work he said : “ In the past honours have been bestowed upon those who have not deserved them. I venture to say that public recognition in the future will be measured by the value of the services to mankind.”

One of the doctors who attended that convention was greatly impressed with John’s speech.

“ John Oliver is certainly a wonderful man,” he said. “ It was astonishing that a man with his education could address such a gathering in terms that were quite clear to us, but which the ordinary layman would never understand.”

Here again John’s marvellous memory, with its aptitude for picking up stray phrases and hints for future use stood him in good stead.

On the question of titles he was once quizzed by the Press

Gallery in a written questionnaire, sent down to him while the House was sitting. In a few moments a page-boy returned with a reply written in a large, round hand :

“ *Re Canadian Titles.* I have given the question no consideration. My natural instincts are averse to the granting of titles in Canada, especially such as are hereditary.”

In fact, he had been too busy with other things to devote any time to an abstract question such as that. Once a capitalist from Glasgow, who had heavy investments in British Columbia, called on him and asked if he would not write the Premier of Great Britain recommending him for a knighthood in recognition of his work for Canadian development. John promised a written reply and the next day gave it. He advised his caller that he thought it would be presumptuous in a Provincial Premier to make recommendations in Imperial affairs, and reminded him that the Canadian Parliament had declared itself against the granting of titles in Canada.

Had he given the question of titles serious consideration I am sure he would have revolted against them as opposed to his native simplicity, and had one been offered him it would inevitably have been refused. In this respect he was :

“ As the greatest only are
In his simplicity sublime.”

SCENE 67. MOUNT JOHN OLIVER

THE traveller on the C.N.R., as he passes Robson or Tête Jaune Cache in the Rocky Mountains, at the western end of the Yellowhead Pass, may see through an opening in the mountains the summit of Mount John Oliver. It stands in the Premier Group of the Cariboo Range, and rises to a height of 10,500 feet. Near it are loftier peaks named after such Dominion Prime Ministers as Laurier, Thompson, Abbott, and Bowell, but, as is fitting in British Columbia, none of these is quite as visible to the passer-by as Mount John Oliver. It is not like the Mount

John Oliver pictured by the cartoonist years ago as being "in daily eruption at Victoria," though a volcano was probably more typical of John than a snow-crowned rock. Still, the snows of many winters were on his head—the mountain is broad shouldered, rugged, and enduring—and in these respects it will stand through the centuries a fitting monument to the man after whom it is named.

It was this rugged aspect of his character that struck Mr. Mackenzie King, who, in their disputes on Dominion and provincial claims, had good reason to experience it. Mr. King said of him :

"Of the many conversations I have had with Mr. Oliver, the one which impressed me most was his account of digging with water above his boots at the bottom of a well which was so deep that in the daytime he was able to see the stars above his head. The incident was associated in his life with a determination to rise to higher things, and the fact that he became Prime Minister of his province as a consequence of his unfailing industry and integrity should make an incident of the kind an inspiration to the youth of every land.

"I always regarded Mr. Oliver as one worthy in every particular of the characterization of 'Honest John' which was generally accorded to him. 'Rugged' is the adjective I should apply to the many virtues he possessed ; perseverance and endurance were outstanding characteristics, and abiding determination to serve the common people was, I believe, the underlying motive of his life."

John was not only rugged, but he admired rugged things ; and I fancy that he felt as much pride in looking at a well-built dyke as in a survey of the ordered products of his mind. He also admired rugged men, though he could venerate the fine. Had he ever read Carlyle, I believe he would have found in these words the very echo of his own soul :

"Two men I honour and no third. First, the toilworn craftsman that with earth-made implement laboriously conquers the Earth and makes her man's. Venerable to me is the hard hand ; crooked, coarse ; wherein, notwithstanding, lies a cunning virtue

indefeasibly royal, as of the Sceptre of this Planet. Venerable too is the rugged face, all weather-tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence ; for it is the face of a Man living Manlike."

To Carlyle's second hero, the mental and spiritual toiler, John would have responded with less enthusiasm, though he would still have been in hearty accord. He would have agreed with Carlyle and Tolstoi in giving him second place to the peasant, though he delighted in culture and mental ability, especially when combined with the character of a gentleman, as evidenced in his admiration for Captain Tatlow and his love for Charles Munro. He would certainly have agreed with Carlyle in his statement of the obligations imposed upon gifted men :

" If the poor and humble toil that we have food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return that he may have Light, Guidance, Freedom, and Immortality ? These two in all their degrees I honour : all else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow whither it listeth."

If the one side of John's character was represented by his mountain, another side was typified by the little town of Oliver, in the South Okanagan Valley, where they raise cantaloupes and other semi-tropical products which embody the warmth and succulence and sunshine in which his nature rejoiced.

Yes, John was rough hewn, and despised all outward ornamentation. Yet while careless in dress and speech, he was generally clean and neat in person. On one occasion he told his audience that he had a bath before coming there in order to get rid of some of the mud his opponents had been flinging at him. He kept his hair and beard neatly trimmed, and though the nails on his broad fingers looked at times as if manicured with a fret saw, they were seldom in mourning for departed soap and water. Erect, broad, and solid as his mountain, he went his way ; and once he made up his mind he was about as easily pushed aside.

SCENE 68. TEMPTATIONS IN THE WILDERNESS

LIKE all successful politicians John had his temptations in the strange wilderness of public life. First was the temptation to use his inside knowledge to financial advantage, and turn the stones of opportunity into loaves for his own cupboard. So far as I know he never profited one cent by any of them. Nor would he permit his family or friends to do so. Indeed, it was, if anything, a deterrent to political favour to be a relative of John Oliver. When I entered his office as secretary it had been suggested that he might put in his son, who could thus earn something to help him through the struggling first years of a law practice.

"I told them I would not put my son in here," he informed me. Nor did the son desire it. He was a true Oliver, in that he preferred to make his own way.

The second temptation was to cast himself from the pinnacle of his Temple of Simplicity, and plunge into the pleasures and vanities of the social life of his time. He was too firmly balanced on the pinnacle to grow dizzy or fall, even though it might have been whispered that his will was such that no evil could befall him.

The third temptation was the most powerful of all. It was to go out into a wider world and possess it. I heard one gentleman urge him to go into Dominion politics, as with his ability he could make his mark.

"No," he replied, "I have devoted my time and attention to provincial affairs, and I feel that my knowledge is pretty well confined to that."

One of his followers, Charles Woodward, of Vancouver, said that he ought to go to England, and see if he could not make some deal for the Pacific Great Eastern Railway. What an appeal to his thrifty nature to take a pleasant journey at the public expense ! He could go back to his native haunts to be hailed as a conqueror returning laden with spoils after long years of warfare in a distant land. In London he might be presented to the King and Queen, shake hands with Lloyd George, MacDonald, and Baldwin, and with his picturesque personality become perhaps the lion of a London season. Who could tell ?

He brushed the temptation quietly aside. "They know as much already about the Pacific Great Eastern in England as I can tell them. I can see no useful purpose that can be served that would justify me in going there at the public expense, and besides, I have more important work to attend to here."

He had in mind the freight rates campaign, which he still considered unfinished, and the fight for the return of the railway lands which he had on hand, so, like the good cobbler, he stuck to his last. It always appeared to me as rather strange that, while he retained so much of the Englishman in appearance and speech, he never manifested the slightest desire to return to his native island. He was thoroughly Canadianized in mind and soul.

While John had no great difficulty in disposing of the Devil of Vanity, he must have found the battle more puzzling when he met the Devil of Political Power. The temptation was so much more subtle. This Satan came smiling and bearing gifts for which he only asked in exchange some seemingly little concession which could apparently do no harm, and how useful his gifts might be when the next election came around! Very often his breath reeked of whisky and beer, but how easily might the sense of smell be lost in the charm of sight when surveying the magnificence of the presents he laid at your feet! Silver and gold could be forged into weapons that would win elections, and so ensure the continuance of your party in power—for the country's good. And if you accepted, it was not for your own sake, but for that of your party and of the country that party was sent to save.

It was a chain of reasoning that has enslaved many a good man in public life. Public men are usually elected because their fellows have faith in their probity and ability or because of the good fellowship that makes a man beloved. It was a quotation of Emerson :

" I oft have heard and I believe it true
Whom man delights in, God delights in too."

And for the most part I have found politicians of both and all parties to be good and likable men ; but they know that the public will overlook in a man the sins he may commit on behalf

of his party in the race for power, though they would condemn the same things if done for personal gain. Thus they are lured in their sophistry, and campaign funds are accepted for the party's (and the country's ?) good.

Of this aspect John fought shy. His friends knew how it jarred him to compromise in such matters, and they were kept carefully from his view. In all the years I was in his office I saw no correspondence on, and heard no mention of, campaign funds from him. The money spent so liberally in advertising and hiring help in elections may have fallen like manna from heaven so far as evidence in the Premier's office appeared to the contrary.

I once heard him discussing with a few party workers methods by which the party outlook, in the election then in progress, might be improved. He observed :

"If we can't win honestly, we had better stay out."

And in this connection no breath of suspicion ever blurred him. In fact, in all the years I was with him, I never knew him to do anything even remotely approaching a dishonest action ; nor, except from an iron sense of duty or in a burst of anger, was he ever wilfully unkind. In spite of Juliet's query to her lover, I am inclined to think there is something in a name after all, and that he took pride in proving himself worthy of the title of "Honest John."

SCENE 69. THE SEVENTIETH MILESTONE

IN his farming days some poet might have written of John Oliver as Longfellow wrote of "The Village Blacksmith" :

" . . . A mighty man is he with broad and sinewy hands,
And the muscles of his brawny arms are strong as iron bands.
His hair is crisp and black and long, his face is like the tan,
And he looks the whole world in the face, for he owes not any man."

Like him, John "went on Sunday to the church," and if he did not hear his daughter's voice singing in the choir, at least it gave him some gleams of Paradise that grew brighter as the years rolled by. "Toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing," onward through life he went, and each morning saw some task begun or continued, though

each evening did not see its close. And in this way he reached his seventieth birthday.

It was just an ordinary day to John. He came down to the office in the morning and struck into his work as if he had forgotten all about it. But he was soon to be reminded. Telephone messages and letters of congratulation came in. His colleagues of the Government remembered him in an address of congratulation expressing their affection and loyalty. From Mr. Poolcy, who was out of town, came a warmly worded wire on behalf of himself and the Conservative Party. John was pleased—yet sorrowful that life was passing so rapidly and there was still so much to be done.

Among his other callers that day was Bruce Hutchison, at that time political reporter for the *Victoria Times*. I quote some passages from his printed impressions of that interview :

“ John Oliver looked up at his calendar to realize that he was seventy. Seventy is a magic age. But as John Oliver noted that the allotted span of years had passed he may have sighed a little, but no other sound, no word about life or anything else, came from his office.

“ If he had wanted to Mr. Oliver could have boomed his ideas out to a very large audience on his birthday. After all, the oldest Prime Minister in Canada, and the only one in the Empire who has survived the war and the chaos after it, could expect some attention on such a notable occasion. At seventy, however, Mr. Oliver appears more willing to take the public into his confidence on almost everything else—except Mr. Oliver.

“ This, you must agree, is unfortunate. Mr. Oliver's ideas of life were hammered out of seventy years of more varied and arduous contact with it than falls to the lot of most of us. His conclusions after this process are vigorous and well worth knowing. They crystallize pretty accurately the character of that fast waning little band of men who built this country—more accurately than the ideas of any other man in British Columbia politics. They would be interesting to the great bulk of us who spend a great deal of valuable time praising, blaming, flattering, and accusing an old gentleman of whom very few know. If he had so desired the Premier could have finished his apple, tossed away the core, and celebrated his seventieth birthday with some highly entertaining revelations.

“ At seventy, however, this much can be revealed—the Premier is not half as much in love with office as he was at sixty. He has found out too much about it. Few tears, one imagines, would trickle down his grizzled face if the trail led back to the good old Delta at the next turning. John Oliver is nearing the twilight of his career in the rough and tumble of public life. The Premier has mellowed.

“ Knock at his ever-accessible door one of these mornings. Push past the inner sound-proof portal into his office, and you find him ready to fold his hands deliberately across his ample vest, throw back his white head and laugh at the world. Time has sweetened a sense of humour that used to get lost in a ceaseless urge to be on the move. The Premier at seventy finds plenty of time for a joke.

“ It is true of course that Mr. Oliver’s whole life is still work, and you couldn’t imagine it as ever being anything else. He starts the day at his office before nine, finishes at six, and usually relaxes beside his domestic hearth with a pile of official documents. Nowadays, however, he goes about as if the safety of the world depended on other things than the Oliver Government. The Premier is not half as hectic as he used to be.

“ He likes to tell you just how to build an irrigation ditch or the proper method of spreading the cement floor in a barn ; or why the old-fashioned muzzle-loading gun he used to carry in the Delta was so much better than the new-fangled kind.

“ Once off on such a tale of the pioneer days the Railway Lands and the Peace River Block and the never-to-be-forgotten freight rates are liable to dangle in mid-air while he recalls the time he cut cedar shakes for twelve hours a day all winter in order to earn \$100 ; and the other time when he cooked for his own road gang and built most of the road under contract with his own two hands ; or how he drained his land of salt water and cut the timber to build his barn. About such homely things he can work up an enthusiasm which is good to see.

“ At seventy the Premier isn’t half as good a hater either as he used to be. He could never find it in his heart, for instance, to be unkind to Mr. Pooley as he used to be to Mr. Bowser. As soon as the present Opposition Leader returned from his honeymoon a while back, the Premier locked up his office for the afternoon, told his stenographer to go to the movies, and toddled out to welcome the bride and groom with real cordiality.

“ The last ten years have been hard on the Premier—harder by far than most of his friends realize. Transplant a man from the

outdoor freedom of a farm, imprison him between four stone walls and chain him down to a desk eight or ten hours a day, and unless he is a very strong man indeed you will break him. Mr. Oliver was the last man in the world to undergo such a routine. When he came to Victoria he would not take to golf, he refused to play bridge, he found his recreation in poring over official business from supper to bedtime. Since he became Premier in fact it is doubtful if he has taken a real day's relaxation or any systematic exercise—and this in a man of massive strength accustomed to violent exertion from daybreak to sunset. Such a changed mode of living has left its mark, as it was bound to do. For a man less vigorous it would have meant disaster.

“On the whole life has been good to John Oliver, but it has given him a full share of those secret sorrows that lurk in the council chambers of the great and echo but faintly in the market-places of democracy. That is why the end of seventy years finds graven deep in his heart the knowledge that a politician's life is not, and never will be, a happy one.”

I find the above an exact corroboration of my own conclusions drawn from a position of daily intimacy, and it explains why there was a limp in John's paces as he passed his seventieth milestone.

SCENE 70. THE SHADOWS LENGTHEN

WHEN John had passed his seventieth birthday I could see evidence that he recognized that the shadows were lengthening rapidly from the west. In his public speeches it cropped out :

“Listen to an old man's advice.”

Or, when accused by an opponent of trying to deceive the people, he answered :

“I ask you, is it likely that I, an old man nearing the end of life, would do such things ? ”

It seemed to me that his face had softened and his blue eyes had grown gentler in the mellowing light of his autumnal days. His bursts of anger were less frequent : Mount Oliver was no longer in daily eruption. Its outbursts were more intermittent and far-between, and the rocks were cooling with the set purposes of his life. He still felt the urge of work, because there were tasks he

would finish before he laid the burden down. There were yet concessions to be won in his freight rates campaign, and the fight for the return of the Railway Lands engrossed him. So he still continued to work early and late.

To outward appearance his health was good, and he could swing a forty-pound box of apples on his shoulder with as much apparent ease as ever, but he had premonitions that it could not last. He wrote one correspondent :

“My health keeps good, but I cannot hope to continue indefinitely.”

An instance of his mellowing came about this time on the occasion of a visit to Victoria by Dominion Premier Meighen, during the campaign of 1926. Mr. Meighen had been given permission to address an open-air meeting from the steps of the Parliament Buildings. All the high lights of the party were there in chairs on the top landing ; and scarcely had Mr. Meighen begun to speak when, to the surprise of everyone, a burly, white-bearded man wearing a grey suit and a round straw hat, was seen clambering up in that direction too. He was greeted with a cheer by his courteous opponents. Mr. Meighen paused to shake hands, and a seat was found for him near his destined successor, Dr. Tolmie, and other Conservative leaders. So, in spite of past differences, John sat and enjoyed Meighen's eloquent and logical address. The brim of his hat was down over his eyes, and he might have been sleeping for aught anyone knew ; but he confessed afterwards that he took in every word, and meant to use it as good material to shoot at.

When the meeting was over Mr. Meighen was surrounded by his friends and a car was waiting to whirl him off to his next appointment ; but hurried and surrounded as he was, he broke through, and climbing up to John, who was still on the steps, he shook him by the hand and expressed his pleasure at meeting him. So Arthur Meighen showed himself a gentleman, and the two opponents, instead of “locking horns,” locked hands. Afterwards there hung on the wall of the Premier's office a photograph of Mr. Meighen landing in Victoria, a fitting memorandum of that event.

The Federal election that followed proved disastrous alike to

Meighen and John, for the former and his party were both decisively beaten in other parts of the Dominion, though in British Columbia only one Liberal was elected out of fourteen candidates. Of course there was a tendency to blame John for the result in his province, though probably he had as much to do with it as with the progress of a whirlwind.

It was followed by rumours that his health was failing and he intended to retire from office. This he promptly denied. He said that his health had improved and, until the people demanded it, he had no intention of retiring.

At Christmas and New Year it was always John's custom to deliver a message to the people of the province on behalf of the Government. That of 1926-7 is worth remembering as his last, and so I quote the opening and the closing sentences :

"Let us give thanks to the Ruler of the Universe for the large measure of prosperity granted to the people of British Columbia during the year just closing.

"As far as is humanly possible to foresee, there is no reason why the prosperity of the coming year should not equal or surpass that of the past. We believe that in no province of Canada, or in any country in the world, are the elements which go to make up the sum total of human life and happiness more favourable than in the province of British Columbia.

"That each and every one of us may fully partake and enjoy that prosperity which we earnestly pray may be granted us by an all-wise Father, is the heartfelt wish of the Government of British Columbia."

Had he but known it, that was his final benediction.

It is fitting that we should close this chapter at the period of his last Christmas by reciting how on two occasions he proved a veritable flesh-and-blood Santa Claus.

A few years before, on a cold and drizzling Christmas Eve, a young boy was landed in the Victoria police-station to be held in jail on some minor charge. Someone telephoned John at his house about it, and asked if something could not be done. John at once forgot all about the comfortable fires at home, the Christmas tree and decorations, the candles and the cakes. He put on his great fur coat, hurried out to the garage, backed out his

car, and in a minute was speeding down toward the police-station.

With his white hair and beard, and burly figure enseoned in the big coat with the high fur collar, the police might have thought that Santa Claus was really coming in, and were not disillusioned when he told them of his errand. He had the boy released on his own guarantee to bring him back for trial, and then packed the astonished youngster into his automobile and took him home for Christmas. And what a Christmas it was ! Instead of spending it in the cheerless jail he was surrounded by warmth and hospitality with plenty of good food and a warm bed, and above all, that atmosphere of radiant kindness that John and Mrs. Oliver knew so well how to dispense. The boy was tried and eventually acquitted, and no doubt he remembers to this day his wonderful Santa Claus.

It was on the last preceding Christmas of his life that John felt called upon to perform an act of similar intention, but under different circumstances. He had received a letter in reference to the case of an old man living in the wilderness of the Highland District near Victoria. He had there a bit of land and a shack in which he dwelt. It was a starve-aere place, and the old man had not been able to earn enough on it to pay his taxes. They had mounted up year after year until they had now reached the point where the law demanded their payment or the confiscation of his home.

It was the day before Christmas when John heard of it, and in his trusty old, open automobile he set out to investigate. He drove some miles over rough and rutted roads, twisting among the forest trees, until he found the settler in his lonely shack, poverty stricken, and with only one young boy for his companion. Here again was a Santa Claus in true winter attire, peeping in, and the visit had a good effect. John had the taxation charges struck out, the old man retained his home, and such was his Christmas gift to the lonely homesteader.

This reminds me of a story about him in other days that indicates how he could have finished his Santa Claus make-up by reverting to old habits.

John would never wear gloves, except when decorum de-

manded it on State occasions. He regarded them as too effeminate for his taste, and back in the old days on the farm he would not wear them at all, but in cold weather would keep his hands warm in a pair of red wool mitts. He wore these in the cold weather of his January campaign in 1909, and they were a great subject of fun for the cartoonists and his citified opponents ; but, as usual, he stuck to them the more stubbornly.

And I thought it a pity that John, kindly old Santa Claus that he was, could not, on these occasions, have completed his costume by wearing those same warm, homely old red mitts.

SCENE 71. CAMPAIGN FUND SCANDALS

IN the earlier part of 1926 the Premier brought in a file of typewritten documents and placed them on my desk.

“ Here is something,” he remarked, “ that is likely to develop into a scandal. I want you to go through these papers and make me an ordered summary. It’s something I’m going to look into.”

The papers dealt with the allegations of a man named Gauthier in Seattle, who stated that he had been commissioned by leading men of the Liberal Party to purchase liquor for the Government stores from Old Country firms, that he had made all arrangements for the same, and was to share the profits with the party, ostensibly to provide campaign funds ; but that the party leaders had later repudiated the bargain. In view of this he asked compensation in large amounts. He implicated the Hon. W. H. Sutherland, Minister of Public Works, and the Hon. J. A. Buckham, Speaker of the House.

John did not believe the charges against his colleagues, and lost no time in probing them. He sent cablegrams to all the British distillers with whom Gauthier alleged he had arranged for sales. The replies he received convinced him that there was nothing in the charges. So he calmly awaited events.

Later came a letter from Mrs. Gauthier saying that she had kept duplicates of all the documents in the case, and unless the

Government complied with her husband's request she would turn the evidence over to the Conservative Party.

John replied defiantly, telling her that he was convinced there was nothing in her claim, and adding :

“ As far as your threat about handing it over to the Conservatives goes I am not concerned what action you choose to take. However, if you desire to confer with the Conservative Leader in the Legislature, his address is,

“ R. H. Pooley,
Barrister, 1218 Langley St.,
Victoria, B.C.”

It was not Mr. Pooley, however, but his colleague from Victoria, Mr. Twigg, who brought the matter before the Legislature in the session of 1927. It was a session that reeked of campaign scandals until they overclouded the House like some pestilential miasma. There had been an Inquiry in Vancouver a few weeks previously in which brewers and others testified that they had paid thousands of dollars into the campaign funds of both parties for years past.

At the opening of the session Colonel Cy. Peck, one of the most respected and popular members of the Conservative Party, moved that the House express its regret that the Government had not expressed any intention of investigating the alleged improper use of campaign funds.

This question of campaign funds was always a source of worry to John. It jarred his innate honesty, and he had to confess that he found it a matter difficult to deal with in a general way.

Speaking on Colonel Peck's motion he said he did not believe that any large or even small sum could be contributed to campaign funds without the stigma of suspicion attaching to both parties ; and what was more, much of this money went into the pockets of unscrupulous persons and was never used for campaign funds at all. He would welcome suggestions from any member of the Legislature showing how conditions might be improved, and if someone would prefer any specific charge that was worth while a Commission of Inquiry would be gladly granted.

“ For my part,” he added, “ I have nothing to fear. I have

maintained my honour in this province for fifty years, and in the seventy years of my life it has not been successfully challenged."

It remained for Mr. Twigg to make the first specific charge with the documents the Gauthiers had given him. He said that here were serious statements, backed by sworn evidence, reflecting on the honour of members of the Legislature, and he requested an investigation.

John, fortified by the evidence his prescience had obtained, replied at considerable length and with much virtuous heat. He read letters of repudiation from Dr. Sutherland and Mr. Buckham, and waxed wroth over the imputations against them. He was willing to welcome an investigation by a Supreme Court Judge and did not fear the consequences.

By the time he got through his blood had risen from lukewarm to boiling-point and he saw everything in a ruddy haze. Shaking an extended fist at the mover and seconder of the motion for investigation, he exclaimed :

"If I am spared and have breath, before God ! I will hold them responsible before the public opinion of British Columbia."

Apparently this outburst had little effect on Mr. Twigg, for ten days later he exploded another evidential bomb. He read a statement of Frank Carlow, a former Liberal organizer in Victoria. Carlow swore in effect that he had an arrangement with the Liberal Party by which he was to purchase liquor for the Government stores, and commissions earned over a stated amount were to go into the party funds.

His statements were given blank denial by those concerned. John was not immediately implicated, but felt called upon to tell the House a thing or two. He recalled how Carlow had come to his office about two years before with certain proposals. The result had been that he had told him to leave his office and never come back. "He left and never came back," he added.

He readily agreed to a Commission in this case also.

The Commissioner appointed was Mr. Justice Morrison, now Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Province. His finding completely exonerated Dr. Sutherland and Mr. Buckham from Gauthier's indictment. The Carlow charges were also dismissed.

By the time this happened John was in no condition to haul anyone before the bar of public opinion. Nor do I think that in his cooler moments he would have tried to do so, for after all, the hearings had resulted chiefly in blowing away any clouds of suspicion that may have hung over the heads of honourable men.

SCENE 72. SUNSET SPLENDOUR

IN spite of the rancour of campaign-fund discussions John emerged from that last session of his life with great honour. It was as if the miasma of campaign-fund charges had exhaled into a purer atmosphere to be transformed to golden clouds which crowned his sunset days with splendour.

The session had not opened auspiciously. His health was failing, and strange pains and strictures shot at times like arrows through his sturdy frame. In about the first long speech of the sitting his voice faltered, he stood unsteadily, leaning on his desk, and finally had to sit down, leaving the address unfinished. There was a chorus of sympathy, and his friends insisted that he should follow the advice of his physician and spend a few days in bed.

John abdicated reluctantly, and spent most of these hours of enforced repose in reading the reports of the proceedings in the House and concocting new arguments to devastate his political foes. Then that question of campaign funds came up. Various points of order were raised, and without its Leader (the specialist on procedure) the House seemed to be weltering into confusion. John could be kept in bed no longer. Doctor or no doctor, he was going into the fight.

Next day the *Victoria Times* had a heading :

PREMIER LEAVES SICK BED TO ANSWER CHARGES OF MISUSE
OF CAMPAIGN FUNDS

The text of the report beneath began :

“ For two hours the Premier answered the Opposition charges one by one, tore them to pieces, silenced Conservative interrup-

tions, and finally made the clear-cut proposition that he would investigate any charge properly sponsored by a member of the House."

That trumpet call was like physic to the old war-horse. He rose from his stall. Like the charger in Job his neck was clothed with thunder. He pawed in the valley and said "Ha, ha !"; he smelt the battle from afar, the thunder and the shouting. At least it proved such good medicine for John that he stuck to his place for the rest of the session. He apparently forgot that he had ever been ill at all, but in his enthusiasm he overstrained himself.

Nor was he in combative mood all the time. He still enjoyed his little tilts of repartee. J. W. Jones, the clever financial critic of the Opposition (and now Finance Minister for the province), had uttered a series of damaging criticisms on the policy of the Government. John, who was the financier, engineer, lawyer, farmer, and general factotum of his Cabinet, undertook to answer him. He did so effectively, closing with a burst of applause from his followers. He was breathing hard from his effort, but he paused to smile benevolently on Mr. Jones and observe :

"I can tell my honourable friend that he can't build a corral big enough to hold me inside."

In fact, John's position in the Ship of State would have enabled him to sing with W. S. Gilbert's cook :

"O, I am the cook and the captain too
And the mate of the Nancy brig,
And the bos'un tight and the midshipmite
And the crew of the captain's gig."

In his capacity of engineer he was defending the Government from attack on the ground that they had paid exorbitant prices for crushed rock to a party follower on a road contract. In his capacity of lawyer he used the *tu quoque* argument that it was a much lower price than had been paid by the McBride Government for similar work on the Songhees Reserve at Victoria.

"But," said Reginald Hayward, senior member for Victoria, "that was relief work."

"Yes," replied John promptly, "it was—relieving the treasury."

In a motion urging the Dominion Government to return the Railway Lands and Peace River Block, he appealed to members of all parties "in their sanity" to support it.

"You don't mean I am insane?" said Tom Uphill, the jovial Labour member for Fernie.

"Oh no," replied John with a benevolent smile. "My friend from Fernie conducts himself with remarkable sanity—on occasions."

"On all occasions," said Tom, when the laughter had subsided.

"Well, we won't quarrel about that," said John good naturedly, and went on with his argument.

He denied that times were as bad under the Oliver Government as his opponents pictured them to be. Affairs could not be so bad when they saw people rushing to pay their taxes in advance even in the City of Victoria, where they were supposed to be asleep twenty hours out of the twenty-four.

"They were not asleep on election day," observed Mr. Twigg, one of the city's four Conservative members.

"Well, you would think they were doped, judging by the result," retorted John.

It was in discussing the position of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway that he delivered one of those maxims of which his brain was so fruitful. He confessed he saw no immediate prospect of dealing successfully with his "illegitimate foster child" as he termed it, either by extension or sale, and they could only carry on and await eventualities.

"I don't know what to do with the dashed thing," he admitted. He added :

"There are times when it takes more courage to stand still than to advance. At least I have found in my experience that it very often requires more courage to stand still and use the wisdom the Creator gave me than to rush blindly forward. Let us proceed with a clear vision and make the decision when we understand all the problems."

That session was to test John's independence of thought. His Minister of Agriculture, E. D. Barrow, supported a "Produce

Marketing Act.” Its purpose was to authorize the appointment of a Board to control the marketing of fruit, and, as far as possible, to obviate the evils arising from private competition in selling. The market had been fed so irregularly, there had been so much price cutting, that the legislation came in response to a demand emanating from the fruit and vegetable growers themselves. John would have none of it. A strong individualist, he had fought his own way to the top in a world of competition, and he thought what he had done others could if they tried. He had no use for such economic Socialism. Such were his views, and he spoke and voted against the Bill. It was not a party question, and his actions did not disrupt a Government in which the majority of the Ministers were opposed to their leader’s view. It was carried over his head. After operating for about four years the Act was declared unconstitutional by the Courts and the Fruit Marketing Board was disbanded.

It was a peculiarity of John that, while his sympathies were with the plain people from whom he sprang, he still loved the old order of things in the industrial and commercial world. While he had never studied Darwin, he held that competition and strife benefited the world by the survival of the fittest. Unknowingly he was an economic evolutionist. On the other hand, his Liberalism was deep rooted in his dislike of class distinction and the privileges granted to those who neither toiled nor spun.

Such a Bill as “ Mothers’ Pensions ” appealed to his humanity, and with the fathering of a somewhat similar Act he was destined to close his legislative career. This was the Old Age Pensions Bill. It was the outcome of a measure previously introduced in the Dominion Parliament. It provided that the Dominion would share equally with any province that adopted it the payment of pensions up to twenty dollars a month to indigent persons over seventy years of age. This appealed, not only to John’s humanity, but to his sense of thrift on behalf of the province. He had passed his seventieth milestone, and no doubt had a fellow-feeling for those of his years who were thrown on the cold mercy of a destitute old age.

So, in that session of 1927, we find the white-haired statesman of British Columbia introducing this Old Age Pensions Bill—an

old man pleading for the old. The Conservatives did not oppose the principle of the Bill, but criticized the method and the smallness of the allowance. They did not vote against it, and it was unanimously carried.

John made no effort at oratory in speaking on the Bill, but contented himself with a plain statement of its need and benefits. It was passed near the end of what had proved a very exhausting session for him, when he often breathed hard and leaned upon his desk, while his voice was husky and showed signs of strain.

It seemed fitting that thus quietly and beneficently he should close his legislative career. The *Vancouver Province*, a paper which often opposed him, while the Bill was still before the House, said :

“ Premier Oliver is entitled to all the credit, political or otherwise, which will accrue to him by virtue of introducing Bill No. 12. There is no doubt he will pass the measure in the local House, and very little that such passage will materially aid the passage of the parent legislation in the Dominion House. Premier Oliver will get the credit of making the child the father of the man. Perhaps he will be known as the father of old age pensions in Canada.”

This referred to British Columbia's position as the first of the provinces to adopt the scheme, and with what better title could John close his last session than “ the father of old age pensions in Canada.”

SCENE 73. A PEAL OF TRIUMPH

So John closed his last session in a blaze of glory. His courage in leaving his sick bed to head his followers in a crisis, the resourcefulness and fearlessness with which he had met the campaign-fund charges, his ready wit and geniality, his increasing tolerance toward his opponents, and his crowning act of humanity in passing the Old Age Pensions Bill, had won for him a warm place in the hearts of the people, and aroused the enthusiasm of his party followers.

Directly after the close of the session a Liberal convention, attended by delegates from every part of the province, was held in Vancouver. His reception there is best described by a news despatch in the *Victoria Times* :

“ As the Premier came forward from the back of the hall he was given a tumultuous reception. Crowds of delegates gathered around him to shake his hand while thundering cheers echoed and re-echoed through the hall. It was some minutes before he could reach the platform through the throngs of his enthusiastic admirers.”

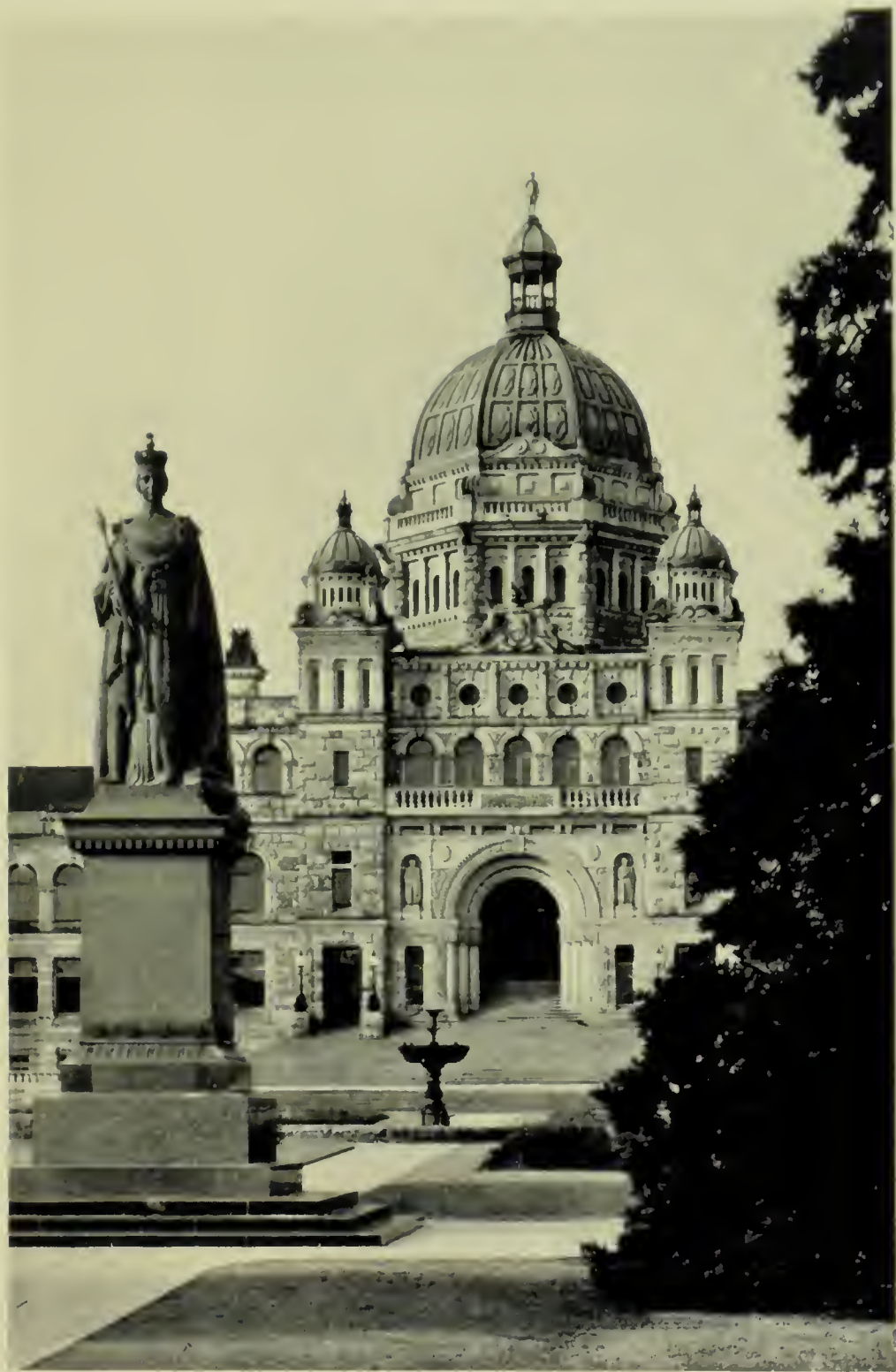
When silence was restored John thanked them in a broken voice. Then, as he steadied down, he gave them some sage advice. He warned them particularly against passing impractical resolutions.

“ It’s a fine thing to have your head in the air, but it’s always best to have your feet on the ground,” he concluded.

With the modesty peculiar to politicians, patriots, and newspapers he went on to tell them of all the good things achieved by his Government. He pointed out how industries and pay-rolls had increased, and how the province stood first in Canada in the production of lumber and fish and base metals, while in agriculture it was rapidly developing. After painting a rosy picture of British Columbia and its future, he concluded with a note of warning :

“ There are still injustices to be remedied. We must clear away the accumulated debris that has gathered in the course of construction, and on the solid rock of fact erect a structure of equity and justice. It will be my greatest joy to see the provinces get together on an equitable basis, so that by co-operative effort Canada may attain her proper destiny.”

He was greeted by rounds of applause, and throughout the convention was referred to in terms of admiration. A Vancouver magazine, the *Western Tribune*, declared that the honours paid him were well earned, for he was recognized by “ political friend and foe alike as a man of unblemished honour and devotion to the public welfare.”



[Bureau of Provincial Information, Victoria, B.C.]

VICTORIA PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Another newspaper said :

“ To-day John Oliver stands head and shoulders above any other man in the party or in the province. He has been the dominant figure at the session of the Legislative Assembly just closed.”

“ You will never make a John Oliver out of an assisted immigrant ! ” remarked Delegate Maxwell Smith.

So John went from honour to honour, and at the banquet which closed the proceedings the greatest surprise of all awaited him. Mrs. M. E. Smith, the sole and distinguished lady legislator of the province, presided, and by her side sat John. At their back stood something draped in the Union Jack, not unlike the figure of a sentinel on duty.

The long line of banqueters nudged each other and smiled.

At a few minutes before nine the flag was removed, and there stood revealed, looking benevolently down on all, a grandfather clock, magnificent in polished woodwork and ornamental facings, the gift of his followers to John. It was unveiled in a storm of applause.

There was more cheering when Mrs. Smith rose to express the pleasure she felt in presenting this testimony of the feeling of his supporters for “ their good old, sturdy, doughty Premier Oliver.” She concluded :

“ Mr. Premier, when the time comes that you will lay down the trials and toils of public life and sit in the quiet of your own home, and you hear this clock chiming out the hours, you will be reminded of bygone days, of the friends who have been true to you, and of this memorable night in the history of British Columbia.”

Just as she finished the clock struck out the hour of nine. In golden vibrations it rang through the banquet hall, gentle, soft, and caressing, yet like a peal of celestial triumph falling in benediction upon him.

As John rose to reply there were tears in his eyes and his voice was choked, and in the silence you could hear the ticking of the clock. It took him a short time to steady himself, and then he said :

"I can only say that the most sincere wish of my heart is that I were more worthy of the kindness and appreciation you have shown me to-night. Not only will this clock tick out the remainder of my life, but it will go down as a treasured memento of this happy event to my children and their children for generations to come. That a grandfather's clock should be chosen is most eminently fitting, for I am a grandfather thirteen times over, and look forward to the future with a good deal of hope."

How soon that clock would tick and its chimes remind him that the end was near he did not know. It was well for him that he could still be warmed by the applause and admiration of his followers and was looking to the future "with a good deal of hope." It was the last time he would ever meet them all in convention assembled, and it was good to think that he went out with all the joy bells ringing.

SCENE 74. THE SENTENCE OF DEATH

GIFTS to John did not cease. On the succeeding day an admiring follower presented him with a marble bust of Sir Wilfrid Laurier to stand on top of the clock as the symbol of a name that would endure above the passing of time.

Directly after the convention he went to Ottawa, chiefly to plead for the opening of the Peace River country by railway to the Pacific Coast. His plea made a great impression on the Railway Committee of the House of Commons, and he was acclaimed as the best-informed man there. While in the east he received invitations to address gatherings in the Maritime Province and Ontario, the latter including the Empire Club of Toronto and the Canadian Club of London; but he felt that his health was failing, and knew there was yet much to be done at home, so he declined them all.

On his return journey he stopped to attend a Liberal convention at Vernon to nominate a candidate to contest the division in a by-election caused by the death of the sitting member. The seat was strongly Conservative, but John was optimistic. When

he reached Victoria he met his friendly opponent, Mr. Pooley, on the street, and asked whether he would have the pleasure of accompanying him later to take part in the North Okanagan campaign.

"Not necessary," said Mr. Pooley. "We have already ploughed the ground."

"But we shall reap the crop," said John cheerfully.

"I'll bet you a new hat we win," said the House Leader of the Opposition.

"Doubled," said John promptly. He said afterwards that he expected to get a straw hat for the summer, and a comfortable felt for next winter at his opponent's expense ; but it was a wager never to be collected.

It will be observed that he still had his spells of facetiousness and cheerful spirits, but those premonitory symptoms of pains and discomforts did not diminish. As the month of April advanced I noticed that there was more than a spring tiredness in his face, and at times there was a pallor on his cheeks that was most unusual for him. His voice on such occasions was husky and weary, and he told of pains that seemed to be clutching below his breast. It was in this condition that he was invited to take a day's journey to Princeton, in the interior of the province, to present a medal of the Royal Canadian Humane Society that had been given on his recommendation. The recipient was an old bearded man, a thinner edition of himself, known as Podunk Davics.

He was an old prospector and woodsman who had signalized himself by his skill and self-denial in locating the whereabouts of Miss Warburton, a lady "hiker" who had lost her way in the forest and for about six weeks had not been heard of. It had been an arduous exploit for a man of sixty-four.

John had recommended him to the Royal Canadian Humane Society, and in spite of uncertain health, felt it to be his duty to present the medal. He had an idea that Podunk Davics would feel a happier and prouder man if the Premier of the Province pinned it on his breast. So John went forth in the uncertain spring weather of the interior valleys, and in a husky voice proclaimed old Podunk's heroism and presented the medal amid the

applause of the assembled crowd. As further tangible recognition he presented him with a cheque for \$100 from the Provincial Government.

It was a fine act to crown a life starred with many generous deeds, but it brought an immediate penalty. He contracted a cold which aggravated other symptoms. His physician, Dr. George Hall, was so perturbed that he called in another doctor for consultation. All the time John came regularly to his office and did his work, but I noticed how hard he breathed on slight exertion, and how often the vivid ruddiness of his face subsided to a dead pink.

Then it was announced in the newspapers that the Premier was going south for a holiday to recuperate. This was done to alleviate public alarm and family distress. In reality we feared for what might be lurking in the brains of his physicians. They were sending him to the Mayo Brothers Institute in Rochester, Minnesota, for a thorough examination.

John may have had his doubts, but he accepted the situation with his usual courage. He started on his journey alone, but his son, Dr. Robert Oliver, of Hamilton, Ontario, was to meet and accompany him on the way. It was on a fine May morning that I walked with him down to the boat to help him with his baggage and say farewell.

I remember how upright he walked with head in air and how cheerfully he talked. I expressed the hope that we should soon see him back again as well as ever.

"I don't think it can be anything serious," he replied, "but it's best to go where they can really tell you what is the matter. I want to know the truth, in any case."

It was like him, and I can well remember that last glimpse of a sturdy broad-shouldered man walking steadily up the gang plank on this quest for the truth about himself.

A few days later came the crushing news. An exploratory operation had revealed a condition of internal cancer beyond remedy. The sower of death had scattered the seeds over too wide a field, and they had sprouted in symbols of mortality that stood out, like a pale and luminous writing on the wall, telling that the Premier's days were weighed and numbered. The doctors said

that the best that could be done was to make him as comfortable as possible for the rest of his days.

All this was kept from the public as much as possible. It was felt to be the more merciful course, since public knowledge of his impending death would arouse a wave of sympathy and sentiment that would sadden him and his family more acutely, and only confirm expectancy of the immediacy of his end. In spite of these precautions the truth did leak out here and there.

It must have been a stunning blow to John, for with all the strong, religious faith of his nature, he was no spiritual ascetic. He was a man who loved life and laughter and the good light of the sun—a man who rejoiced in the love of home, the smile of friends, and all the sweet endearments of earth.

His son wrote of him : “ With the courage that had characterized him all his life he bore the blow.” And such a blow ! It was as if some stern judge, interpreting the laws of Nature, had said :

“ You have sacrificed your health to your sense of duty, and the penalty of Nature is that before the year has passed you shall be taken from the prison of this life and delivered to the House of Death, and may God have mercy upon you ! ”

And one can fancy John standing, as was his wont, with shoulders squared and head thrown back, and saying :

“ All I have done, I have done believing it was right, and into God’s hands I commend my spirit.”

SCENE 75. THE WOUNDED LION

IN a few days John recovered sufficiently from the exploratory operation to be taken to the house of his son in Hamilton, where he remained for a few weeks under his care. Then, having further recovered his strength, a desire for the country places came upon him, and he was able to stand the strain of an automobile journey to the old family homestead at Priceville, in Gray County, where he stayed for some time.

It was during this Ontario stay that his youngest daughter, Mildred, was married. She had been engaged for some time to a

Mr. Savage, an accountant then living in Montreal. The wedding had been arranged for that summer, but on account of John's condition they proposed that it should be indefinitely postponed. But he would hear none of it. He told them that nothing would please him better than to know that he had lived to see all his family comfortably married and settled in life. He insisted that the wedding should take place just as if nothing had happened to him. They complied, and at the quiet ceremony John gave his well-beloved daughter away. I think he must have found some satisfaction in the thought of another duty well done and the hope that their life and happiness would go on long after his had passed away.

While staying at the old farm homestead John received a visit from his friend and follower, Brigadier-General Odum, proprietor of the *Vancouver Morning Star*. That the General was deeply impressed by that interview was shown in the news despatches he sent to British Columbia, and most of all in the remarkable editorial he wrote in his own paper upon his return. I have pleasure in quoting from it.

PREMIER OLIVER

"Back from a hasty trip to eastern Canada, I find one impression, amongst the many I have gathered while away, standing out so clearly and so boldly as to completely overshadow all others—an impression of the wonderful spirit and fortitude displayed by the Hon. John Oliver, Premier of British Columbia. Associations extending over a quarter of a century had intimately unfolded before my eyes the stirring character and exceptional ability for which Mr. Oliver is so well known throughout the whole of the Dominion. But in spite of all that I knew, the revelation I received at Priceville opened my understanding anew as vividly as a flash of lightning pierces the gloom of the blackest night.

"A picture persistently came to my mind as I recrossed the continent on my homeward way—a picture of one of Carlyle's great, shaggy heroes. I could see the storms and the tumults—the warfare of nature, and the struggles of man; and calm in the midst with a clear vision, a great soul and a confident purpose, an heroic figure. And the figure had the countenance of John Oliver.

"The Premier has always been an emotional man. At times of

stress he feels deeply. But to-day emotion is only present as an undertone. Purpose and a definite plan give quiet and repose. As clearly as the casual traveller sees the broad highway stretching out before him, so clearly does Mr. Oliver see the path of duty.

“ Wholesome, natural, unpretentious, courageous—kindly at heart, but resourceful and daring in strife—the Premier is an absolutely outstanding man. Had Mr. Oliver had the advantages of the early education of a Rowell, a Borden, a Meighen, or a King, he would have been a very great figure in the Dominion of Canada. And who shall say that, though lacking these, he is not ?

“ It is only a little more than two months since I went east with Premier Oliver, when he was on his way to present his views with reference to Peace River transportation to the Railway Committee of the House of Commons. He then knew nothing of his trouble, although he was conscious that he was not as well as he would like to be. But he was in great spirits, and mentally he was at his peak. His appearance before the Railway Committee yielded him a new triumph. He was easily the best-informed man in the room, and he left a deep impression.

“ Since then the scene has sadly changed. The Premier has a new cross to carry. But his bearing under the cross is one to earn for him a heightened prestige in, and the unbounded love of, his province.

“ VICTOR W. ODLUM.”

General Odlum, in discussing that visit with me afterwards, said :

“ I would never have noticed any particular difference in him except that he was quietly serious and his wife was evidently solicitous about him. He sat down in his usual heavy way, and his voice indicated a consciousness of weakness, but his nerve was unshaken. He faced his position frankly, and said that he might be lying under the sod any time within two or three weeks, but there was still certain work he would like to do. Apart from that he had lived a very satisfactory life and had no regrets. He evidently felt pride in what he had accomplished. He spent some time discussing political problems, and hoped he would return and have strength enough to get some things going. He was not worrying much about his family, as he felt they would be left comfortably provided for—in fact, he seemed to have no worries at all except for his obligations to the people.

“He made a tremendous impression upon me. I had always a high regard and admiration for him, but after that interview my feeling was one of positive love for a man of such type as one seldom meets in this life. He was like a great, shaggy old lion at bay, hoping he would have strength to get back to his den before he died.”

It was following an interview with General Odlum that the *Vancouver Province* had a front-page article headed :

“HEROICALLY FACING LAST ILLNESS PREMIER OLIVER
WORKS FOR B.C.”

It stated that Premier Oliver was convinced that he had the strength and endurance in his rugged frame to serve British Columbia for a longer period than his medical advisers would admit, and his iron will was bent upon the accomplishment of the tasks which he, of all others, was most competent to understand.

There were three major problems he wished to see settled.

First, he desired to argue the case of the province for the return of the Railway Lands and Peace River block before the Martin Royal Commission.

He hoped also to be able to attend a conference of Dominion Ministers and Provincial Premiers to be held in Ottawa in the fall, so that he might place before the rest of Canada a comprehensive view of British Columbia's claims.

Lastly, he had in mind a plan to dispose of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway as part of the scheme for a rail outlet from the Peace River district to the Pacific Coast.

But after his return John was called upon to fight a grimmer foe, and these great problems were lost to him in the Valley of the Shadow, or remained to be taken up by those who should succeed him.

SCENE 76. THE HOME COMING

I TOOK my holidays during John's absence in the east, and on my return to the office was surprised when my assistant, Miss Gray, told me that the Premier had already arrived home. I asked her how he was. She told me she had spoken to him over the telephone, and he had said that he was a very sick man.

I was working under the Acting Premier, Dr. MacLean. He had been throughout most sympathetic in his dealings with John, and when he heard that he was coming home he took the boat to Vancouver and travelled up the railway to meet him.

"How did you find the Chief?" I asked when I went into his office on his return.

Dr. MacLean shook his head gravely. "You will be shocked when you see him."

He was right. I went up to John's house that morning with a packet of letters we thought he would like to see. I sat in the old familiar study to await his coming, and hearing his step rose to meet him. But who was this? Two months earlier I had seen a sturdy old figure walking up the gangplank to learn his fate—here I met a broken old man with bowed head and tottering steps. I took him by the hand, and told him I was sorry to see him like that.

He slumped down in a chair and bent his head in his hands over a table.

"It's my finish, Jim," he said brokenly.

In a shaken manner I could only place my hand on his shoulder and say: "We are all in God's hands and must trust for the best."

That fit of depression did not last long. I knew that the best antidote for John was work, so long as he had strength to attend to it. I told him I had some letters for him to deal with, and he wiped his eyes and looked up—in a minute his old, alert self again.

He had a pronouncement for the Minister of Agriculture on future farm policy, and he dictated a personal letter to his son on the farm. The son wished to buy a second-hand ditching machine. John advised him to test all the nuts and screws to find how much they were rusted, to note whether the scraper was much worn, and to see that the woodwork was sound. He finished by

expressing the hope that in a week or so, when he had sufficiently recovered from his journey, he would go back to the old farm for a visit.

In fact, there was a longing throughout those latter days to revisit the green fields that he had redeemed from the wilderness so many years ago. I think he longed to see once more the wind sweeping the wheatfields in waves of purple and gold, to watch the ripening fruit in the orchard, and to hear the lowing of the cattle in the lush, green pastures behind the dyke.

In the face of this desire I could well understand John's occasional moods of depression in view of his approaching end. He was a man whose life for many years had been rooted in the soil, and the grass and trees and all things springing from it had become a very part of his being. He was passing from the world in one of its most beautiful cities—a place of tree-shaded streets and green boulevards and pleasant gardens and lawns, all bounded by the soft blue sea, and crowned with the snow-capped glory of the Olympics beyond the straits and glimpses of his own majestic Mount Baker to the east. Yet he would have given it all for another sight of the farm that was the child of his muscle and brain, brought forth through years of toil and hardship that made it doubly dear.

As I returned from that first interview after the home coming, some words of Browning ran through my mind, and transposed themselves inchoately as fitting his case :

“ He was ever a fighter, so—one fight more
 The best and the last.
 He would hate that death bandaged his eyes and forebore
 And bade him creep past.
 No ! Let him taste the whole of it, fare like his peers
 The heroes of old.
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
 Of pain, darkness, and cold.

“ Face the power of the night, the press of the storm,
 The post of the foe :
 For he stands the Arch Fear in a visible form,
 And the strong man must go.
 For the journey is done, and the summit attained
 And the barriers fall,
 Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained
 The reward of it all.”

And John fought his battle and won. Those days of suffering marked his final graduation from the stern logic of the Mosaic law to the Divine wisdom of the Sermon on the Mount. In its larger light he saw the virtues and the sufferings of his foes, as clearly as he had seen their faults and failings in the past, and held out the hand of forgiveness to all.

SCENE 77. THE LAST CAUCUS

AFTER John's return there was much speculation as to whether he would continue as Premier or call upon his party to name his successor.

His loyal old colleague, William Sloan, Minister of Mines, himself a very sick man, expressed the popular view one day when he came into my office leaning on his cane and trembling slightly :

“ If I have any say, the old man will remain as Premier to the last. If he has to go, let him pass with all his honours upon him.”

John asked that a meeting of his followers in the Legislature be called, and he would place his position before them. They came from all parts of the province, and assembled in his office to meet him on a warm morning in July.

He was weakening daily, and the chauffeur and I had to help him in and out of his car. On either side we assisted him up the Parliament Buildings steps, which he had often mounted so vigorously and cheerfully in the past, and then to his seat in the office to meet some twenty of his followers gathered there.

I was not present at the meeting, but was told about it by Mrs. M. E. Smith, who, because of her position, had been selected as spokesman for the occasion. She said that was the most touching meeting she ever witnessed. All waited in solemn and sympathetic silence as John, seated in the chair of authority, pale and white-headed, in a voice husky with suffering, pronounced his own death sentence.

He told them of his journey to the south, and how at Mayo's he had gone on the table, and the doctors said they could not operate.

“ You know what that means,” he said quietly. “ I can no

longer carry on, and I want you to choose a new leader. There is not the least reason why you should not do so. The business of the country must be considered first, and it is in your hands."

They had prepared a written memorial signed by all present, expressing their affection and esteem for their leader, and concluding with their desire that he should remain as Premier. It also expressed the willingness of his fellow-Ministers to relieve him as much as possible from the work involved.

When Mrs. Smith rose to read the memorial she confessed that she was too much shaken to do so. Instead, she placed it on the table before him, saying :

"I cannot read this, John. You sit quietly there, rest your head on your hands, take your time, and read it yourself."

As he bent thus and read he was completely overcome. In the silence they could hear a tear patter on the paper. He read with blurred eyes, and when he had finished he looked up and said rather wearily :

"You've all been very kind. If that is your wish I'll do as you suggest, but I'm tired, very tired, and I think I'll go home and lie down."

After that he never entered his office again. They named Dr. MacLean "Premier-Designate," and from that time forward he carried on the work in practical entirety. A shrewd and kindly man, he did much to smooth the path for his Chief in those troubled latter days.

SCENE 78. RECONCILIATION

WHEN it was known that John Oliver was nearing his end a flood of sympathy poured in from friends and foes alike. Mr. Pooley personally visited him, and some, whom once he had strongly denounced, asked me to convey to him their sympathy and good wishes. Among the many sympathetic letters he received, none delighted him more than one written by his oldest and strongest political opponent, W. J. Bowser.

Mr. Bowser had always admired John, and in that letter he fully expressed it. In extending his sympathy he told him that he

had always been "a bonny fighter," and he hoped that the courage that had characterized him all his life would carry him through.

John lost no time in dictating a reply, and as it was characteristic of his attitude toward his old opponents at that time, I avail myself of the privilege of publishing it in full :

"DEAR MR. BOWSER,—Amongst the many letters of sympathy I have received during my illness yours of the 5th inst. has been most deeply appreciated.

"Ten years in office as a Minister of the Crown gives one a viewpoint that it is impossible to obtain in any other position ; and in looking back over past experiences the thought has often been impressed upon my mind that it is regrettable that so much bitterness and animosity should be present in the public service. However, we are all human. We all have our failings, and much of what is disagreeable arises from lack of knowledge and experience more than from desire.

"My career as a public man is closing in. You may have years of usefulness ahead of you yet. At all events, that is my earnest desire, and for your future welfare you have my very best wish.

"Thanking you for your kind letter.

"I am,

"Yours very truly,

"JOHN OLIVER."

Mr. Bowser told me he considered this about the finest letter he had ever received, and treasures it to this day.

That utterance from John's Calvary showed how nearly he had approached the Holy of Holies where Divine Wisdom resides.

Nor did he stop with that. He wrote letters of appreciation to his colleagues in the Government, particularly to the Honourable William Sloan. He knew that the Minister of Mines was a sick man also, and his letter to him struck a deep chord of sympathetic feeling. Had he but known it, within another six months Mr. Sloan was to join him in the Great Army of the Departed.

His hours of suffering and despondency were relieved by many kind visits. Premier Bracken, of Manitoba, when on the coast, went especially to his house to see him, and John, crippled as he was, hobbled on his sticks to the porch to bid him farewell. At

that time of the year many visitors came to Victoria from the east, and the most distinguished among them never forgot to inquire about or to call upon John Oliver.

Among his callers one day when I was there came his old party leader, the Hon. J. A. Macdonald, Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal for the Province. They talked a little of olden days, and John, forgetting all about the dignity of his position, addressed his old colleague as "Mac" just as he might have done years before. The Chief Justice admired an enlarged photograph of John hanging on the wall.

"You shall have it, Mac," said John at once. "I don't know anyone I would rather give it to."

Mr. Macdonald thanked him, and said he would be pleased to have this memento of his old "leader."

John deprecated the title of "leader," and insisted on that of "friend," which pleased them both.

Kenneth Blatchford, member for Edmonton in the Dominion House of Commons, had been associated with John in the freight rates campaign, and was one of his warmest admirers. Coming to the coast at this time he called upon him, and on taking his leave said :

"John, I am going to fly back to Edmonton, and to-morrow afternoon I am going to ask the pilot to take me over your house, so if you are sitting out on the porch I may wave to you."

Be sure that John was sitting on the porch when the loud hum of the aeroplane sounded in the sky, and he waved his hand in response to a similar salute from the air, like an emblem of the comfort to descend upon him from above.

SCENE 79. LIGHT IN THE VALLEY

IN the hall of the Oliver home the grandfather's clock continued solemnly to tick out the cbbing hours of John's mortal days, but its golden chimes were silent. Those chimes had fallen softly on the ear as the touch of a butterfly's wing, but something in them disturbed him. Whether it was that the taut nerves in the hours of pain seemed ready to snap from the slightest vibration, or that

the peal reminded him too much of his earthly triumphs in the light of eternity that was breaking upon him, or that they proclaimed too audibly the brevity of his passing hours, I do not know ; but at his request they were silenced. Perhaps he only wanted quiet and solitude for thoughts that lay too deep for tears.

In the meantime, soft and low in the daylight, but loud in the dead of night, the clock ticked from the hall, rap, rap, rapping for his soul to come forth.

This also proved too much for him in the last few days, when he could no longer leave his bed, so the tick of destiny joined the peal of triumph in the Hall of Silence, and the clock stood dumb and motionless, like a pathetic watcher, waiting in patience for the end, when it should strike again.

So, in the watches of the night, deep silence fell upon him, and the memories of the past and hopes of the future mingled in mystic union in his soul.

On the whole, in spite of increasing weakness, he was remarkably cheerful. Before he finally took to his bed, I remember talking with him in his study one day, and asking him whether he felt much pain.

“No, I can’t say that I do, except when those awful fits of nausea come over me, but this thing keeps swelling within me till it feels like a washtub.” And he smiled at his own homely simile of the disease that was consuming him.

At the end of July came his seventy-first birthday. In his condition it seemed mockery to wish him many happy returns. John knew that the end was near, and would have scouted congratulations, but he did receive many gifts of flowers and tokens of good wishes and sympathy from political friends and foes, while his colleagues in the Government presented him with an address expressing their esteem for their old chief. I do not doubt that John was pleased with these tokens of affection, but he said little, for I think he was conscious that that birthday would be his last.

I noticed that as my visits continued there came a time when I no longer saw him sitting dressed in his chair. More and more he had to keep to his bed, until at last he could leave it no longer. I continued to take up a few letters that Dr. MacLean thought would interest and please him, and these I read out to him by his

bedside when he was well enough to attend to them. In those dealing with public matters he took less interest as the days went by.

"You can deal with those in the office," he would remark. To those of a more personal nature he would content himself by giving broad, general directions for reply. On one occasion he showed me the scars on his body left by the exploratory operation.

"A pretty big cut, wasn't it," he remarked with a smile. But gazing on that scarlet incision of a fatal revelation I could not help thinking how much it resembled the form of a cross, and admired the more the courage and the cheerfulness with which he bore it. His sister told me of spasms through which he would grit his teeth and clench his hands, but no whimper would come from his lips.

"I will fight to the last," he told his physician, Dr. George Hall, one day, "and when the end comes I shall say, 'O Death, where is thy sting! O Grave, where is thy victory!'"

As he drew nearer the end he told the doctor, as speaking from a comatose condition in which he saw a vision of the Beyond: "I shall be able to report that I have fought a good fight."

When Mrs. Mary Ellen Smith, his loyal lady follower in the Legislature, visited him he asked:

"Now, tell me, Mary Ellen, what is your idea of a future life?"

She answered that no one knew, but she was convinced that in the Divine Wisdom we should live on, and Scripture and evolution alike taught that the next life must be better than this.

"Well, that is a very comforting thought," he replied.

He received many visits from his pastor, the Rev. W. G. Wilson, and found comfort in refuge from the temporal as they discussed the things eternal and unseen.

During the vigils of the last few weeks members of the family were constantly in the house. The sons left their business on the mainland to come over from time to time, and some of the daughters were always there. A constant attendant was his son-in-law, the Rev. F. E. Runnalls, who was there with his wife.

Nightly the family gathered around the bedside, where Mr. Runnalls led them in Scripture reading and prayer, and they concluded by singing one of the old hymns that John loved so well. He particularly asked for those he had learned at Sunday

School, such as, "What a friend we have in Jesus," "I need Thee every hour," "Jesus, Saviour, pilot me," and "Nearer, my God, to Thee."

No doubt these simple old hymns brought back memories of childhood in the Valley of the Dove, and they fell upon his soul like a mother's words comforting a troubled child. The Scripture readings also gave him peace and hope. With the Psalmist he believed that the Good Shepherd in His mercy would not leave him in the Valley of the Shadow, but that he should emerge to dwell in the House of the Lord for ever. One night his son-in-law read to him the words of the Master :

"Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father's House are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you."

Again he read to him the words of St. Paul :

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

And how often the words of the same apostle found lodgment in his soul :

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

Thus the visions were unfolded to comfort him, and when they closed those evening invocations with a parting hymn such as "Sun of my soul," his spirit was irradiated and soothed. "When the soft dews of kindly sleep" steeped his wearied eyelids, there was the sense of pillowing his head in peace on the Master's breast.

One evening they found him sleeping and omitted the service. The next morning he gently reproached them for not waking him.

"I am never too tired for that," he said.

Henceforth he drank daily of his fountain of strength, and as the body faded the soul grew more and more toward its heavenly likeness.

SCENE 80. HARVEST HOME

I SHALL never forget my last interview with John. It was a warm morning of the 15th August, 1927. He was lying in a room off the garden on the ground-floor of the house, and through the open window the summer scents came in. He lay comfortably pillowed on the white iron bedstead, and a middle-aged nurse with kindly face was by his side. His days of suffering had left purple blotches on his face, and he was visibly wasted ; but the cheerful spirit smiled out undaunted still and made you forget the disfigurements of disease.

He jocularly introduced me to the spinster nurse as a married man of whom she need not be afraid. The nurse remarked that she had avoided many worries, but had no doubt lost some of the best joys of life as well.

"That's the way of life," remarked John, whose mental vision seemed to be remarkably clear that morning. "We can't have everything, and if we try to escape the troubles we are sure to miss many of the pleasures that go with them."

It was his law of compensation to the last.

When the nurse had left the room I went to the bedside by the window to bid him good-bye. He seemed, somehow, to have a consciousness that it would be a last farewell. He took my hand gently in his, and lifting his head slightly from the pillow looked into my face.

"Well, Jim, I have always respected you, and we have been a long time together," he said quietly with a smile. "We may not have always done the wisest thing from a party point of view, but we did the best we knew how, and nobody can do more than that."

I was too touched for reply, and even as he spoke his head sank again upon the pillow, and with a smile of ineffable gentleness upon his face his eyes closed in peaceful repose. I continued to hold his hand until his deep breathing assured me he was asleep, and then placing it quietly on the coverlet, in sadness I left the room.

That night a gleam of receptive consciousness returned to him—as if in expectancy of the last evening service—as the family

gathered around his bedside. Once his son-in-law had read for him from the Revelation of St. John the Divine, the vision of the New Jerusalem descending out of Heaven as a bride adorned for her husband :

“ Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

“ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away.”

And to one who had overcome so much it promised :

“ He that overcometh shall inherit all things ; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

Perhaps these words struck on his dimming senses like echoes from a distant world, but we are glad to believe that the vision of “ the city that had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine on it ” brought him some gleams of glory too.

It seemed like a happy inspiration also that the last earthly hymn to fall upon his ears was, “ Abide with me,” that tender poem of consolation with its wistful tune so full of prayer and hope. To him, upon whose day of life the night was falling, it was good to say : “ The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide.” And these lines must have sounded like the echo of his own oft-repeated thoughts :

“ I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless ;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness ;
Where is Death's sting ? Where, Grave, thy victory ?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me ! ”

And then the closing prayer came soft as a caress :

“ Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes ;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.”

And last the vision triumphant :

“ Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee ;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.”

And who shall doubt that these words—stealing in the tender vibrations of music through his fading faculties—fell upon his receding soul like dew upon a folding flower, refreshing and strengthening it to reopen with new beauty and glory in the sunrise of eternal day!

Thenceforth the brief gleams of consciousness flickered ever more faintly through the thickening clouds, that mercifully pillowed his pain and eased his way, till the long coma deepened to the perfect rest.

And so, when the leaves were beginning to fall and the summer flowers to fade, and the sheaves were being shorn in the fields he had redeemed, the Great Reaper gathered him in.

W. H. 17
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EPILOGUE. THE AFTERMATH

WHEN it was learned that the strong, heroic soul had passed away the flood-tide of sympathy rolled in. On its crest it bore a shoal of telegrams and letters. Among the first was a message from the Prince of Wales, then in Vancouver, addressed to Dr. MacLean as Premier-Designate :

“ We have heard with great regret of Mr. Oliver’s death. It will be a real loss to your province. W. H. K. 12 7

“ EDWARD P.”

Speaking later in the day at a luncheon of the Canadian Club in Vancouver the Prince prefaced his remarks by telling how he had met Premier Oliver on his previous visit, and with what regret his brother, the Duke of York, and he had heard the news of his death that morning.

“ His death is a very sad one,” he continued. “ Through his own efforts he rose to be the head of the Government of this province. Some of my own generation may wonder sometimes if we have that spirit, and if we can do all the things such men did. I believe that that spirit of courage and endurance still exists.”

The Governor-General (Viscount Willingdon), Prime Minister Mackenzie King, Governors and Premiers of other provinces, all remembered him. Premier Baxter, all the way from New Brunswick, wrote that he had never come into personal contact with Premier Oliver, but from reports of his actions and speeches admired him as one of the most vigorous and forward-looking Canadians. He added : “ His death while discharging his duties reminds each man in public life how much he may have to leave unfinished of the things he has been trying to do.”

Newspapers of all shades of political opinion were profuse in their eulogies. They exemplified the old Latin motto, “ Speak nothing but good of the dead,” because they seemed to find

nothing but good to say. I quote briefly from three of them, because I believe they were all written by men who had been in close contact with him in the latter years of his life.

This from the *Victoria Times*, written by his friend of the un-numbered years, the Managing Editor, B. C. Nicholas :

“ It is the virtues of such men as he that prove that humanity is still sound at the core, that the gospel of service is still receiving effective practical application. His heart was ever with the plain people. From them he sprung, and to them he was always true. He was the most noteworthy as well as the most picturesque of Canada’s provincial Premiers.

“ His career was so diversified, his achievements so unusual, his personal qualities so exceptional that whole volumes could be written about him and do no more than justice to him and the place he filled in the world. If the story of his life could be impressed indelibly upon the minds of the youth, not only of this country, but of every land where native worth counts for more than material possessions, the cause of civilization would be appreciably advanced.”

The editorial in the *Vancouver Province* was, I suspect, written by another old friend, P. C. Rawlings, who had formerly visited him daily in his capacity of reporter. It read in part :

“ He is dead now, gone as he wanted to go, with the honour and the responsibility of the first citizen of British Columbia still resting upon his broad shoulders, with no shadow of decay upon his faculties, and no faltering of his spirit. And as we say good-bye to him for the last time, we know that a good man has gone to his long home, and that we shall not soon look upon his like again.

“ There is a portrait study of John Oliver now showing in the collection of photographs at the Exhibition. It shows him as we like to think of him, with his face in repose, and the fine outline of his head revealing all that was memorable in his character and capacity for affairs. And he had a fine head on his shoulders, just as good for the work he had to do as it looked. Premier Oliver’s brain was a very capable instrument indeed, and all the praise that he has had for his cleverness and resourcefulness was

quite justified. And most of all, he was a dependable man. You could depend on John Oliver in an emergency, and you could lean on him when the going was rough.

“ Now that his course is run and his battle ended, and we remember how brave and uncomplaining he was in the sore affliction which has taken his life, we find ourselves thinking, first of all, of the very human and likable man he was.

“ We remember how he was never too busy to see anyone that had the least claim on his attention, and how the genial courtesy which he practised was natural and unstudied in him. We remember how he had always an apple or a peppermint to offer his visitors, and somehow, now that he lies dead in Victoria, the memory of old John Oliver’s apples and peppermints is more persuasive than all the eloquence of the formal eulogies, and we care more to remember that he was a warm-hearted, laughter-loving man than that he was the foremost public man of his time in this province.”

The *Vancouver Morning Star*, owned by his old friend and warm admirer, Brigadier-General Odium, had this to say of him, probably penned by the Managing Editor, J. E. Norcross, an old-time friend of John :

“ Honest John Oliver. Was ever nobler title given a man by his fellow citizens ? He was always under attack, but his right to the title prefixed to his name was never impugned. Honest John Oliver he was, and Honest John Oliver he continued to be to friend and foe alike. He leaves a record that will be treasured by remote generations of his descendants.”

To Mrs. Oliver came letters from persons of all degrees. Farmers, working men and women, women’s associations and institutes, professional men in learned vocations—all wrote to express their sympathy and sorrow.

I remember that one clergyman quoted Tennyson’s “ Ode on the Death of Wellington,” and compared John with those who—

“ The toppling crags of duty scaled
Are close upon the shining table-lands
To which our God himself is moon and sun.”

I thought how, from the same poem, he might have added those other lines so descriptive of John :

“ His life was work, his language rife
With rugged maxims hewn from life.”

Or that he was—

“ Rich in saving common sense
And, as the greatest only are,
In his simplicity sublime.”

THE FUNERAL

It seemed that the Fates conspired to honour John Oliver's funeral, and its like has never been seen in Victoria to this day.

All the morning his body lay in state, white and still, in the Legislative Chamber where his eloquence had so often stirred his listeners, or made the high ceiling ring with their laughter and applause. It seemed strange to think that the voice which had so often stormed there in debate was now silenced for evermore. But there he lay in the dark coffin, with hands folded on his breast, and the eyes closed in his white and wasted face.

At either end of the coffin stood a soldier in Highland uniform, each resting statuesquely upon his rifle ; and they were crowned with high, black busbies that seemed to raise them to preternatural height and had some resemblance to the plumes that waved over the hearses years ago. On the rich carpet, in the marble panelled room, with the portraits of the King and Queen looking benignly down, with the living as silent as the dead, it was a scene not soon to be forgotten.

Throughout the morning a constant stream of admirers from all walks of life passed the coffin to catch one last glimpse of the ruler they had loved so well. There were many women among them, and not a few came out with tears in their eyes. Mrs. Oliver and the family were given a special time in the chamber alone with the dead husband and father who had brought such honour to their name. When they came forth with faces half concealed, the crowd stood aside in silent sympathy. Mrs.

Oliver had borne the trial with wonderful patience, but the tears were often in her eyes.

In the afternoon of a fine August day he descended for the last time the broad stone steps from the State gate of the Parliament Buildings where he had fought his way to honour and fame. This time he was borne by the pall bearers to the waiting hearse below, and thence was carried through the city to the last service in the church he had so faithfully attended.

It was a notable concourse that bore him along. Both royalty and vice-royalty were represented there. The Prince of Wales (following the custom of the royal household) did not attend in person, but sent a special representative from his staff in Brigadier-General Trotter, who came in all the splendour of his uniform. The Governor-General had instructed the local naval commander to represent him. The Hon. R. R. Bruce, Lieutenant-Governor of the province, and a personal friend, was there. The Dominion Government was represented by the Hon. W. R. Motherwell, Minister of Agriculture, and the Hon. Peter Heenan, Minister of Labour. It seemed fitting that the heads of these departments should be there to honour one who had been both farmer and labourer for so great a portion of his life. Not only all the provincial Cabinet Ministers, but all the Opposition leaders and many of their following were also there. There were judges, and leaders of commerce and industry, and all the dignitaries of the land. And, what would have pleased John most of all, there were many old neighbours who had left their harvest fields in the Delta in order that they might be there to honour him. It was said that it looked as if half the population of Delta had come over.

A military band in Highland uniform led the procession, and the solemn notes of the "Dead March" sounded through the streets. Crowds thronged the sidewalks everywhere. So large was the attendance of visitors from the mainland that a special boat had been put on to carry them over on the previous night, and the morning steamer from Vancouver had brought nearly two thousand passengers, most of them coming to take part in or see the funeral of Honest John.

Street cars paused, automobiles parked by the wayside, and places of business were closed as the procession passed. Not the

beat of a hammer or the grind of a wheel was heard, and parents lifted their children high, so that they might tell to future years that they had seen John Oliver's funeral.

Thus they bore him to the church already overcrowded and with a throng outside the doors. I was present with the family in the pews reserved for them, and shall long remember that service. On the platform with the Rev. Dr. Wilson stood Archdeacon Laycock and the Rev. W. L. Clay, representing the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches, with both of which John had been connected. The pealing of the organ, the singing of the dark-robed choir, the sweet voice of the soloist, and the congregation joining in his favourite hymn, "Unto the hills," or "The sands of time are sinking"—all these were impressive, but most affecting of all was the discourse of his pastor, the Rev. Dr. Wilson, who sought to comfort them by showing how "the dews of sorrow were lusted by His love."

It was not so much a sermon as a heart-to-heart talk delivered in solemn and earnest tones, yet he spoke as one deeply moved. His only formal pronouncement was that the story of John Oliver should find a place in the curriculum of every school in British Columbia, if not beyond the province.

He spoke of his visit to the Premier a few days before his death, when they had talked for an hour, in which he revealed the deep spirituality that underlay his life, while the only regret he expressed was that he had been unable to do more for the country he loved.

As he told of those nightly services by the bedside of the dying man many a tear was shed, but he brought comfort in summing him up as "a great, good, and useful man whom all had admired and many had learned to love," and whose work and example would remain to benefit generations yet to come.

And after the service was over and the last word spoken, they bore him to his rest in the peaceful, pleasant country, among the trees and fields of the quiet Saanich farms, where the birds would sing through the fading days and the grass be kept green about his grave.

THE SOUL'S MUSINGS

And all this time, in those vast spaces that lie beyond the narrow boundaries of our sight and hearing—where the music rolls beyond the silence and the glory glows above the light—I could imagine the soul of John Oliver, radiant on “the shining table-lands,” watching “with larger, other eyes than ours” the splendour of his earthly obsequies. And even as he watched he mused :

“All this is kindly and well meant, but how little it matters to me now ! What matters is, that I have fought a good fight and have tried to live worthy of the honest name they gave me. It matters that I have taken a bit of God’s rugged earth and have made it a fertile dwelling-place for future generations of men. It matters that I have tried by word and example to warn my people against the fickle winds of chance, and to direct their footsteps in the pathway of toil and thrift. It matters that in my public life I have worked unselfishly for the good of my country ; and the benefit of that labour the coming years will show. It matters that I have tried to inspire my own children to tread the straight path and work with brain and hand ; and that I have done my best, by word and deed, to dignify the humble labour of common men.

“Most of all, I remember with gratitude unspeakable the thousand words of good cheer, the friendly smiles and greetings, and all the little deeds of love and kindness that have sprung like flowers by the wayside of my life. These are the things that matter—these are the thoughts that count. The pomp and pageantry will pass, but these abide.”

THE END

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